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विषय संख्या

पुस्तक संख्या

आगत पंजिका संख्या

पुस्तक पर किसी प्रकार का निशान लगाना  
वर्जित है। कृपया १५ दिन से अधिक समय  
तक पुस्तक अपने पास न रखें।

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पञ्जिका संख्या ..... 1951

पुस्तक पर सर्व प्रकार की निशानियां लगाना  
वर्जित है। कोई सज्जन पन्द्रह दिन से अधिक देर तक  
पुस्तक अपने पास नहीं रख सकते। अधिक देर तक  
रखने के लिये पुनः आज्ञा प्राप्त करनी चाहिये।



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1951

# THE VISVA-BHARATI QUARTERLY



080312



FOUNDED BY  
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

EDITOR : KSHITIS ROY

VOLUME XVII, PART I  
MAY—JULY, 1951.







Rabindranath Tagore

ॐ ऋते ज्ञानान्न मृत्तिः

पुस्तक सं०.....

आगत सं०.....

दिनांक.....

गुरुकुल प्रशाला काँगड़ी

## FOUR CHAPTERS

"Four Chapters" (CHAR ADHYAY) is a brilliant and widely discussed later novel of Rabindranath Tagore, now available in English. The scene is laid in the opening years of the century, years of the Bengal era, a stormy background to a moving tale caught in its turmoil. It is a story of love and a high tragic intensity.

THREE RUPEES AND EIGHT ANNAS.

## S IN CIVILIZATION

In his eightieth birthday and three months 41, Tagore speaks out his anguish at the sight of the fearful crisis impending on civilization. With in the West painfully crushed, he yet hope of the ultimate triumph of Man's spirit. interest.

A PORTRAIT. ONE RUPEE.

## POEMS

In English, are 122 poems by Rabindranath in his own translation. The selection corners of the poet's work, includes songs of the and ends with some beautiful lyrics of his last days. An essential volume for a fuller understanding of this great poet of our age.

WITH NOTES, REFERENCES TO BENGALI ORIGINALS, AND  
ILLUSTRATIONS. FIVE RUPEES.

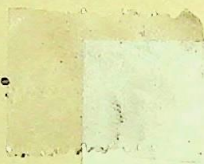
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of  
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The Visva-Bharati Quarterly,  
Santiniketan, West Bengal  
India.







Rabindranath Tagore

ॐ	ब्रह्म ज्ञानार्थ मन्त्रः
पुस्तक सं.	.....
आवक सं.	.....
दिनांक	.....
गुरुकुल प्रशाला काँगड़ी	

## FOUR CHAPTERS

"Four Chapters" ( CHAR ADHYAY ) is a brilliant and widely discussed later novel of Rabindranath Tagore, now available in English. The scene is laid in the opening years of the century, years of the Bengal Revolution, which provides a stormy background to a moving tale of two young lovers caught in its turmoil. It is a story of love and conflicting passions, and a high tragic intensity.

CLOTH. THREE RUPEES AND EIGHT ANNAS.

## CRISIS IN CIVILIZATION

In this paper, written on his eightieth birthday and three months before his death in 1941, Tagore speaks out his anguish at the sight of a second world war and the fearful crisis impending on civilization. With his one-time faith in the West painfully crushed, he yet preserved to the end his hope of the ultimate triumph of Man's spirit. A document of historical interest.

WITH A PORTRAIT. ONE RUPEE.

## POEMS

Here, for the first time in English, are 122 poems by Rabindranath Tagore, all except twelve in his own translation. The selection covers the four main periods of the poet's work, includes songs of the Swadeshi movement, and ends with some beautiful lyrics of his last days. An essential volume for a fuller understanding of this great poet of our age.

WITH NOTES, REFERENCES TO BENGALI ORIGINALS, AND  
ILLUSTRATIONS. FIVE RUPEES.

A complete list of Tagore's English Works will be sent on request.

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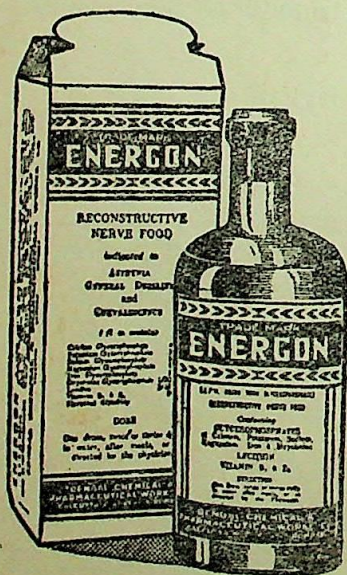
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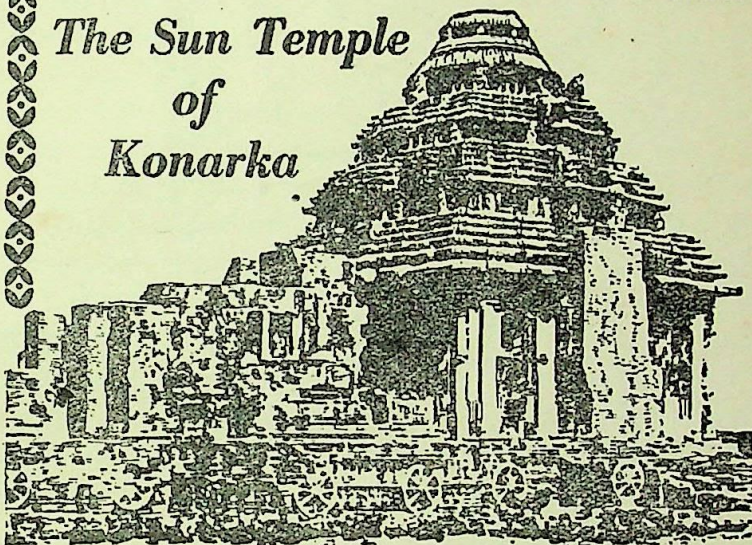
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## *The Sun Temple of Konarka*



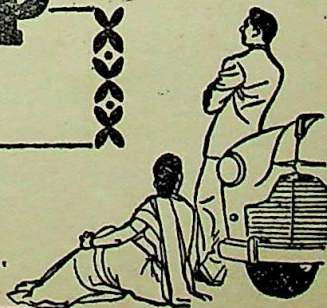
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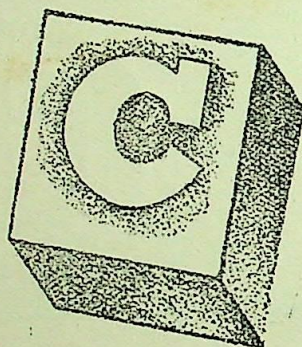
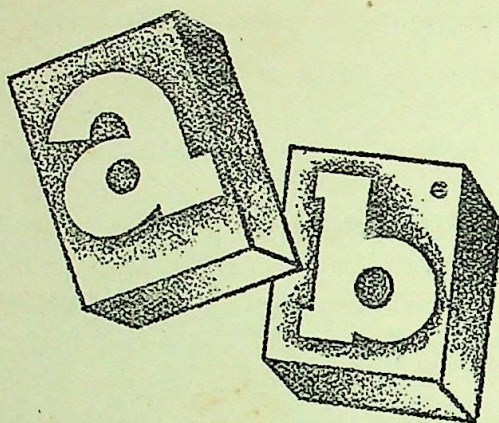


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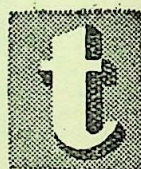




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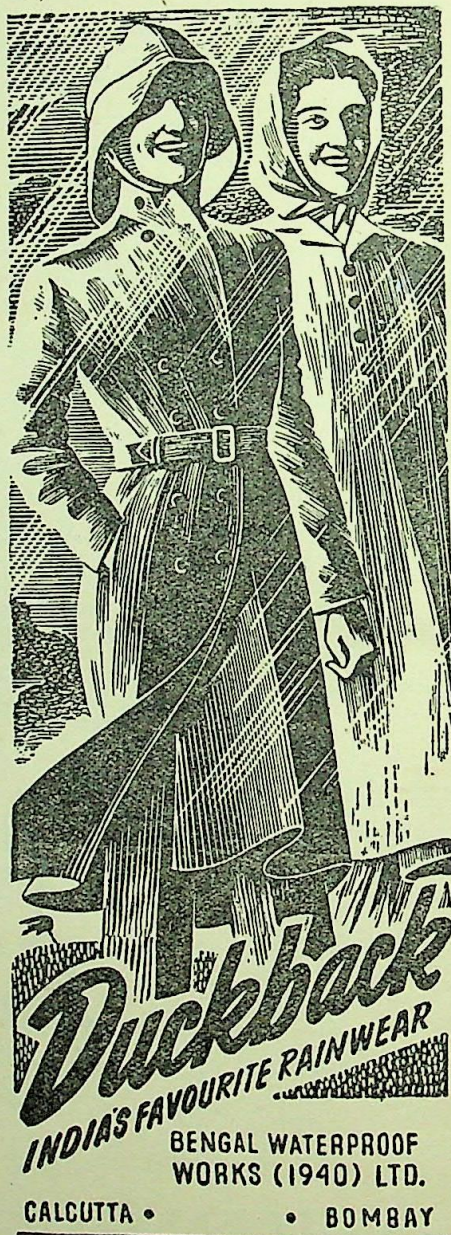
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# THE VISVA-BHARATI QUARTERLY

VOL. XVII

CONTENTS FOR MAY—JULY '51

No. 1.

The Scientist and the Soul	Satis Chandra Chatterjee	1
Sri Aurobindo : A Study	Shankar Lal Kaul	9
The Significance of The Later Works of Yeats	Manoj Kumar Chatterjee	19
Tagore and Yeats	Hirendranath Datta	29
Myth and Modern Poetry I : W. B. Yeats	Alex Aronson	35
Rammohan Roy and The Ideal of National Education	Saroj Kumar Das	44
Time in Tagore's Poetry	Prabas Jivan Chaudhury	56
A Challenging Decade : Bengali Literature in the Forties	Lila Ray	67
Review of Books and Book Notes		74

## ILLUSTRATION

W. B. Yeats : Photograph

One volume of the Journal is issued every year in the following quarterly instalments : May-July ; August-October ; November-January and February-April.

Annual subscription rates are : In India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon Rs. 8/- : Foreign—8 dollars or 14 shillings inclusive of postage. Subscribers who desire that their copies should be sent by registered post, should send Re. 1/- extra per year, to cover the extra postage. A single copy costs Rs. 2/8/- ( foreign 1 dollar or 4 shillings. ) inclusive of postage.

The subscription is payable strictly *in advance* for the subscription year which commences from May and ends in April of the following year.

Remittances should be made by draft or crossed cheques, or by postal money order payable to the Editor, *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Santiniketan P. O., West Bengal.

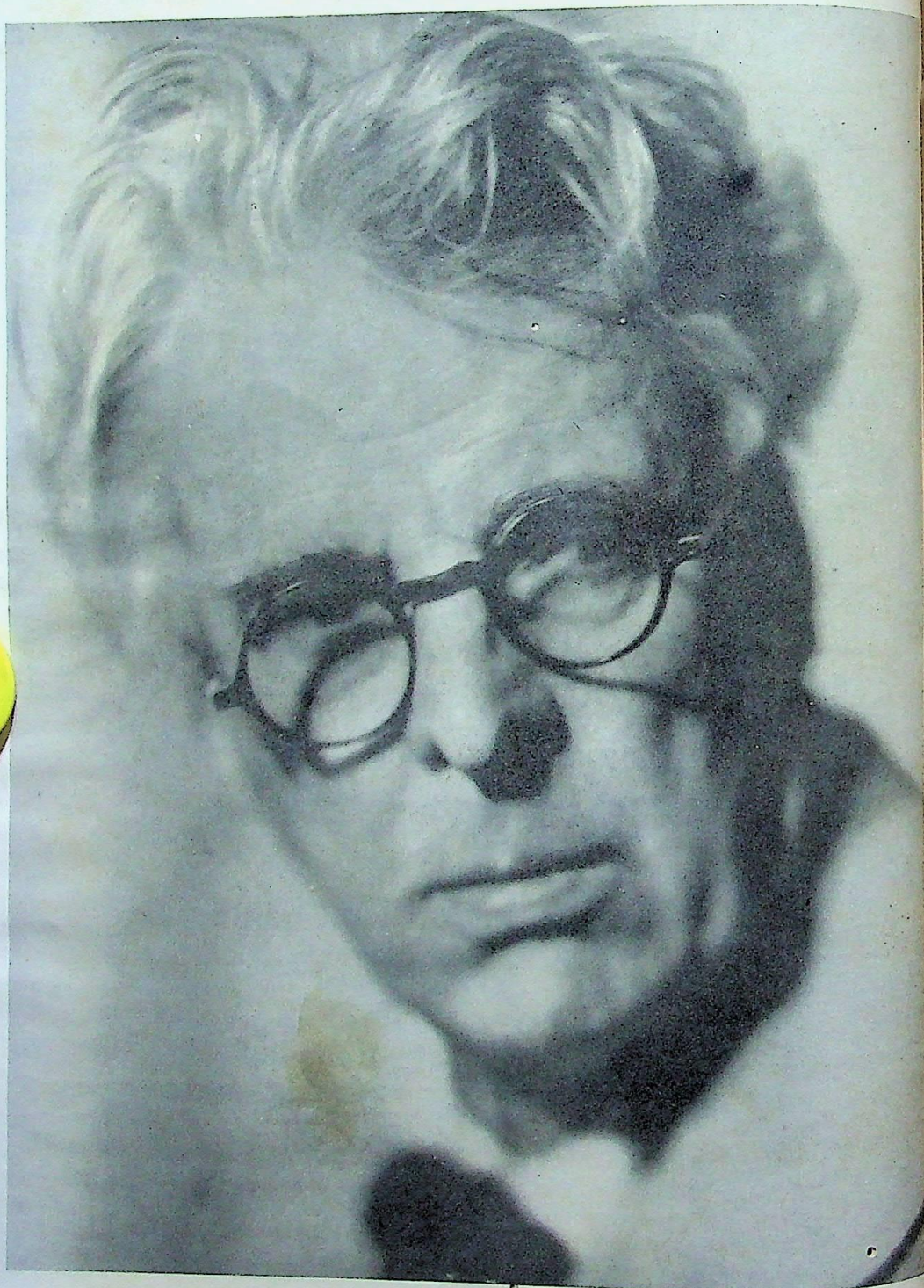












William Butler Yeats : 1865-1939  
*By courtesy of British Council.*



## THE SCIENTIST AND THE SOUL

*By* SATIS CHANDRA CHATTERJEE

SCIENTISTS OF ALL AGES and countries are generally sceptical about the existence of the soul as an immaterial reality which is different from and in a sense independent of the body. In modern times, they not only do not believe in the soul, but declare that it is unscientific to believe in it. The object of this paper is to discuss the propriety of the scientist's attitude towards the soul. It proposes also to show how the scientist's attitude is rather unscientific in this regard.

Scientists are generally of opinion that there is no soul other than and independent of the body. By the soul or self of a man, some of them mean his body with the quality or function of consciousness, while others go so far as to mean only the body with its functions and without anything called consciousness. Thus we have two broad scientific conceptions of the soul or the self. We shall explain and examine them separately.

Taking the second conception first, let us see how it stands. Those scientists who accept this conception of the soul are more radical than the others who favour the first view of it. According to them, the physical objects of sense-experience and their elements are the only realities that are acceptable to science and the scientists. What is not an object of actual or possible sense-experience is unreal and imaginary. Psychology as a science deals with observed or observable facts which are open to inspection by all of us. But what is called mind, consciousness or soul is not open to public observation and does not admit of sense-experience. Hence they are all unreal and fictitious objects which have no place in science. For science,



the reality of a man consists in his body and its natural functions. The so-called functions of mind or consciousness which are attributed to a man are really the functions of his body, being only certain imperceptible movements in certain parts of the gross body. When a man thinks, it is not the case that certain mental or conscious processes go on within him. What really happens is that certain imperceptible movements take place within his vocal organ and he talks within himself without uttering words. So also it is with all other so-called mental or conscious processes in a man. They are all functions of the body, or inner and imperceptible bodily movements. Man is thus reduced to the unconscious physical body with its overt or covert movements, and is deprived of his soul, mind and consciousness. Such is the deplorable attitude of some scientists towards the soul of a man. And we find the same attitude towards the soul in almost all systems of psychology and philosophy which claim to be scientific and profess to be based on and verified by sense-experience.

The conception of man just explained above may be called the crude scientific concept of the soul. As compared with it, the other scientific concept of the soul appears to be somewhat refined and reformed. Here the soul is not equated with the material body and its unconscious movements. In addition to these, the existence of mind or consciousness is admitted, because there is an internal perception of the phenomena of consciousness in man. But as consciousness is perceived to exist in the perceptible living body, it is regarded as the quality of the body itself. When the body attains a certain complexity of development and becomes endowed with a central nervous system, it is found to possess the power or function of consciousness. Consciousness is an epiphenomenon or effervescence of brain activity, just as phosphorescence is a feature of the waves of a sea. There being no evidence of the existence of consciousness independent of the body, it is unscientific to treat it as a quality of any unperceived immaterial or spiritual entity. Hence what



ordinary people call the soul is, for the scientist, nothing more than the conscious living body. Generally speaking, then, scientists repudiate the idea of the soul as a spiritual reality which is related to, and yet different and distinct from, the body.

Let us now discuss the scientist's idea of the soul. But before we do so, we should have a clear idea about the nature and function of science itself. By science we mean the systematic study and rational explanation of facts of experience. It is the primary function of science to observe, describe and analyse all the facts of experience without omitting or neglecting any of them. It would be the most unscientific thing for a scientist to ignore actual facts or even to twist them to suit his preconceptions and presuppositions. Secondly, science aims at a rational explanation of the facts of experience by bringing them under certain laws and relating them to their proper causes and conditions. It may even be that for such reasoned and reasonable explanation of facts, the scientists have to admit the reality of entities which are not directly open to sense-experience, but without which sense-experience cannot be rationally explained. That is the justification for the theories of atoms, electrons, protons, etc., in the past and present history of science. These entities are as far beyond the reach of our senses as is the soul or spirit admitted by certain philosophers. If the scientists are justified in making these assumptions for the sake of a rational explanation of facts of experience, there is no reason why some philosophers should be unjustified in their admission of the soul as a spiritual entity when that is found necessary for the same purpose. We shall return to this point later on. Now we should observe that the two essential characteristics of science are faithfulness to facts of experience and rational explanation of them. With this idea of the essential nature of science we proceed to examine the scientific concepts of the soul.

The first scientific concept, as we have explained it before, is that the soul is the material body with its natural functions and without any consciousness. As against this crude notion of the



soul we are to point out first that, while claiming to be scientific it really arises out of an unscientific attitude of the mind. A scientist should be faithful to, and must have due regard for, the facts of experience. That there are certain mental states in a man is as good and as certain a fact as that he has a body and its states. Even if we grant that sense-perception is the only reliable source of knowledge, it may be pertinently asked : Do we not have a kind of perception, called internal, which gives us an immediate knowledge of our mental states ? And do we not perceive in these, consciousness which is nowhere to be perceived in the external material objects ? To deny the existence of consciousness is, therefore, to reject the evidence of our immediate experience and ignore certain actual facts of experience. And this is the most unscientific act for a scientist to do. Secondly, we are to observe that, but for consciousness there would be no ground for our asserting the existence of the body. If there be no consciousness, how could we know that we have a body at all ? For a material body, to *be* or simply to exist is not to become conscious of itself. If, then, we *know* that we have a body, that is because there is such a thing as consciousness in us. Hence the scientific idea of the soul as the unconscious material body also turns out to be dogmatic and irrational.

Turning next to the other scientific idea of the soul we find that, although it means an advance on the first concept, yet it does not really help us to explain all the facts of man's life and experience. On this view, the soul of man is his living conscious body. Consciousness is here said to be a quality of the body, because it is perceived to exist in the body and to arise out of the activity of the brain. But it is rather misleading to speak of consciousness as a perceptible quality of the physical body. None of us perceives consciousness in the body or the brain in the same way in which we perceive the colour, red in a rose. The red colour is *in* a rose, but consciousness is *of* the body or the brain and not *in* the body or the brain. That is to say, the body or the brain is an *object of* consciousness and not *conscious objects*.



themselves. Further, to say with the scientist that consciousness is a by-product of the complex combination of the material elements composing the body, is only to make an hypothesis which has not yet been verified. So far as human knowledge goes, we have not anywhere perceived consciousness to arise out of the combination of unconscious physical elements, however complex that might be. So the scientist's idea of consciousness as an epiphenomenon of brain activity has no more validity than that of an unproved assumption which must not have any place in a rational science. Then, assuming that consciousness is an epiphenomenon or shadow of brain activity, we do not see how it can act or exert any influence on the body as it is found to do in emotion and volition. Nor, again, do we see how it can be acted upon in what is called sensation. It is a matter of common experience that strong emotions and volitions of the mind move the body, and strong sensations break in upon the mind. But all this is inexplicable on the view that consciousness is a shadowy phenomenon. Interaction is possible only between two real and substantial entities and not between a substance and its shadow. To be true to the facts of experience, therefore, the scientist must admit either that consciousness is a reality or that it belongs to an immaterial reality called the soul.

There are some other weighty considerations which render the scientific idea of the soul improbable and incredible. These are partly linguistic and partly logical and psychological. In ordinary life we use such expressions as '*my* body', '*my* mind', '*my* intellect' and so on. On the contrary, expressions like '*I* body', '*I* mind', '*I* intellect' are not only not used, but are laughed at when used by anyone. If human language is any index to the realities of life, we are to say that the body, mind and intellect belong to and are somehow owned by the soul, but are not themselves the soul of man. It is true that we sometimes use such an expression as '*my* soul'. But here we should note that there is no absurdity in our taking the expression to mean '*I*, the soul'. Rather, we feel that such a rendering of it



brings out the real significance of the expression in question. When I say 'my soul', what I mean is just 'myself' and not that there is an 'I' to which the soul belongs. As for ordinary judgments like 'I am lame', 'I am fat', etc., we are to say that they have their basis in the wrong sense of identity between soul and the body. The soul as embodied and identified with the body may be spoken of as lame, fat, etc. But that such identification is wrong comes out clearly from the fact that the lame man considers himself to be the same person that he was, before he became lame. If a man were really the body as a whole, then with the loss of a limb he would cease to be the same person. This, however, is not a matter of actual experience. Rather, a man considers himself and is considered by others to be the same person both before and after the loss of a particular limb. All this goes to show that the soul of a man is not his body, but an abiding reality which, although related to a body, is different and distinct from it.

The greatest difficulty in accepting the scientific concept of the soul as the conscious living body arises from an individual person's sense of personal continuity and personal identity. A normal person has no doubt that there is an unbroken continuity between the different states and stages of his life. The past states and stages in his life are continuous with his present life. Not only are they continuous, but they are felt or experienced as continuous. How are we to explain this indubitable *sense* of continuity in the life of an individual person? This can hardly be explained by the continuity of development of his body. There may be a sort of physical continuity in the development of the body like the one we find in the continuous flow of the water of a river. But mere physical continuity is not enough to explain psychical, i. e. experienced continuity. If it were so, a river could become conscious of the continuity of its flow. Hence to explain the sense of personal continuity properly, we have to admit the existence of a conscious reality called the soul or 'self' of man. J. S. Mill felt the difficulty in explaining the continuity



of our conscious life in terms of a series of successive states and processes of consciousness, and had to admit a bond of some sort among them. This bond, we say, is constituted by the self of man. A mere succession of conscious states does not explain the consciousness of succession. What we require for this purpose is a constant, conscious reality or soul which binds together the successive states as parts of its personal life.

The necessity of admitting the reality of a soul in this sense becomes all the more patent when we try to explain our sense of personal identity. An individual person is not only conscious of the continuity of his life through different states and stages, but is also aware of his identity in and through them. In fact, the continuity of a man's life requires something which remains identical in it and makes it continuous. I am now conscious of myself as being essentially the same person that I was ten years ago. This unquestionable sense of personal identity in me cannot be explained by anything like my body, senses, mind and intellect. For all these have undergone considerable change during the last ten years of my life. The sense of personal identity has been sought to be explained by some scientists in terms of continuity of the body, while others have sought to explain it away as false and illusory. But a closer view of the matter would show that the attempt of the former is unsuccessful and that of the latter is unscientific. As we have pointed out, the continuity of our body is no explanation for the *experienced* continuity of our personal life. Assuming that it is so, we do not see how it can be taken to explain our sense of personal *identity*. It is one thing to say that something is continuous, and quite a different thing to say that it is identical. In fact, however, the idea of continuity, instead of explaining identity, itself requires some sort of identity for its explanation. A thing is said to have a continued existence, if and only if there is something which remains identical in it and makes it continuous. The idea of its continuity presupposes the idea of a continuant, i. e. something



permanent which continues to be the same in it. If, then, the scientists want to give a rational explanation of the sense of personal identity in man, they must admit in him the reality of the soul as a permanent self-conscious principle over and above the mind-body complex. The other alternative, as adopted by some scientists, is to say that man's sense of personal identity is illusory, there being really nothing identical in him to produce it. But this obviously involves the fallacy of a vicious circle in the scientists' reasoning. This may be put as follows: 'There is no soul because the sense of personal identity is illusory; and the sense of personal identity is illusory, because there is no identical soul.' Apart from this logical flaw in the scientists' argument, we are to point out that the sense of personal identity is a matter of immediate knowledge for us, and that to reject it as illusory is to be blind to facts of experience in order to save one's favourite theory. Further, the scientists should note that even the illusory sense of personal identity in some cases presupposes an unerring experience of real identity somewhere in our life, just as the illusory perception of moving landscapes during a train journey depends on the true perception of the train's motion. This genuine experience of a real identity in man's life is the experience of man's real self which transcends the scientist's material or bodily self. We may have a glimpse of the real self in some ecstatic states of deep meditation and yaugic concentration. The scientists may not ordinarily have these states. But they cannot afford to ignore them altogether. Rather, as true scientists they should investigate them properly along with other experiences of our psychical life and try to give a rational explanation of them all. If such a salutary course of the study of man's life be followed by the scientists, we may very well expect them to form a better and truer concept of the soul than what they dogmatically assert at present.



## SRI AUROBINDO : A STUDY

By SHANKAR LAL KAUL

TWELVE CENTURIES AGO, Sri Gaudapada, Sankaracarya's grand-preceptor, made attempts in his famous *Karikas* on the *Mandukyopanishad* to systematize the teaching of the *Upanishads*, and to reconcile Buddhism and *Vedanta*, which had been drifting apart. A compact but thin treatise, the *Karikas* is probably the earliest of all the extant works of its kind designed to evolve a metaphysics out of the inspired utterances of the *Upanishadic* seers. It is a far cry from the age of Sri Gaudapada to the last forty years of this century, during which Sri Aurobindo after his spiritual awakening in the Alipore Jail, studied the *Sastras*, meditated, produced his books and then passed away. But the two contemplatives did essentially similar work, with the spiritual experiences of the mystics of the *Upanishads* as their background. While, however, Sri Gaudapada left only the short *Karikas* behind him, and a number of commentators from Sankaracarya onwards followed him with their exegesis, Sri Aurobindo has bequeathed to us thousands of pages from his own pen. He is his own best commentator. He has said everything that he could say about the two poles of existence, Spirit and Matter, and the categories between them, whose germs he has found in the *Vedas*, or which he has forged for himself. In spite of all this, or rather because of this, he cannot be easily summarized. All that a general student of his, who has digested his broad meaning, can usefully do is to deduce from his writings simple lessons, or an outline, to help the common reader. Without such help, the beginner, who has not the necessary background, is likely to find Sri Aurobindo difficult.

The centuries separating Sri Aurobindo from Sri Gauda-



pada cover the bulk of history in all departments of human activity. The world, with its bewilderingly large number of ideologies, and its gadgets of all kinds, is to-day a much bigger book to read than it was even as late as the end of the last century. Sri Aurobindo put to himself the stupendous task of deciphering this book and rendering it for us. Yoking his logical intellect to an intuition awakened by *tapas*, he embarked on his search for truth with one-pointed concentration. Through the spiritual discipline to which he subjected himself after his voluntary retirement from home and public life, he made his own the mystical experiences of the sages and seers of all countries and all ages. With his prodigious knowledge of ancient and modern philosophies, he formulated a metaphysics out of the teaching of the *Vedas* and the *Vedanta* and of later schools of Indian and European thought.

Sri Aurobindo combined in himself the imaginativeness of the poet with the vision of the prophet. He set for humanity a new destiny to be realized individually no less than collectively. He described this destiny in metrical language in his "Rose of God" from which a stanza may be quoted :

Rose of God, smitten purple with the incarnate divine Desire,  
 Rose of Life, crowded with petals, colour's lyre.  
 Transform the body of the mortal like a sweet and magical rhyme,  
 Bridge our earthhood and heavenhood, make deathless the  
 children of time.

"Transform" is the key-word in Sri Aurobindo's system, as will appear below.

The major philosophical works of Sri Aurobindo are the *Essays on the Gita*, the *Life Divine*, his exposition of the *Isavasyopanishad* and his *Letters*. In the *Essays on the Gita*, he has shown that no particular school of ancient philosophy by itself can claim proprietorship over the book,—not even Sankaracarya's. At the same time, he has not accepted without qualification any modernist interpretation of the book,—not even Tilak's. According to him, the book is not the gospel of



the ascetic only ; it is not the gospel of the adorer of God only ; it is not the gospel of the man of action only. It does not simply teach patriotism or humanism or altruism. It is something more comprehensive. While it synthetizes for the pilgrim the paths of contemplation, devotion and works, its final thesis,—the burden of the Divine Song—is an all-sided surrender and dedication to God. Far from being a *nanyadastiti-vadin*, a nothing-but-this philosopher himself, he will not yield to any nothing-but-this narrow interpretation of this gospel, or of the gospel of Eternal Truth which he has realized. It is true that some of the older commentators of the *Bhagavad Gita* also held this synthetic view of its essential trend and meaning. But Sri Aurobindo brought to bear on his interpretation of the book a knowledge of the modern world and its thought, not accessible to his predecessors, and this without departing from its letter. In the *Essays*, he makes repeated references to Sri Krishna's offer to teach Arjuna how to attain Him, the "Me" of the *Gita*, *samagram*, integrally. This attributive *samagram* is important for the understanding of Sri Aurobindo's idea of the higher life. He turns at several places in the *Essays* besides their own, to the last but two of the five concluding verses of chapter xv of the *Gita*, which he considers to be among its key-verses :

There are two Beings in the world ( or the Divine is apprehended by people in two aspects ) the K'sara ( the living and moving Spirit, the immanent God ) and the Ak'sara ( the immutable Silence, the transcendent God ). The K'sara embraces all beings ; the Ak'sara is said to be the Stable Ground. The *Uttama Purusha* ( Supreme Being ) is another called *Paramatma*, who as the eternal *Isvara* pervades and supports the three worlds. Because I transcend the K'sara and am also above the Ak'sara, I am known in the world and the *Vedas* as *Purushottama*.

The two other verses that follow say in brief :—

He who knows Me as *Purushottama* knows all and approaches Me in every possible way. He who understands this, has fulfilled his life's mission.



What Sri Aurobindo means is that to know God *integrally* and thus 'fulfil life's mission,' one should seek to know Him as exceeding the aspects of immanence and transcendence jointly and severally, and not only as the Brahman detached from all duality and division, or as the Personal God who creates, sustains and fulfils the worlds. There is thus a new trinity in the *Bhagavad Gita* ; if we please, there are three Gods according to Sri Krishna and Sri Aurobindo, three-in-one, with the third as the highest. The first of these is the Immanent God pervading the many ; the second is the Transcendent Being ; and the third above the other two is the Paramatma or Purushottama, who is at the same time Being and Becoming, One and Many, Rest and Activity. It may be noted that the first and the second are "the God that becomes and disbecomes" and the "Wholly Other" respectively of Christian mystics, and the third is the Saccidananda of the Vedanta. What has all this to do, it may pertinently be asked, with Arjuna's original doubts as stated in the beginning of the *Gita*, and the questionings that may occur to every spiritual seeker in his own *Kurukshetra* ? The answer is that Sri Krishna's decree is that we may not be able to fulfil our highest destiny by simply trying to shut our eyes and look within ; we may not succeed in dying to our little selves without understanding the universe of which we are a part. But much less can we ignore our inner being, and hope to realize our goal by merely looking outside us and seeking to improve our environments by restless activities. We have to stretch ourselves vertically and horizontally,—vertically by subtilizing and impersonalizing our mentality, and horizontally by expanding and universalizing it. We have to attain the status of Purushottama, who remains immobile in his multitudinous activity. The pilgrim of God must, in the language of Islamic mysticism, do the "journey to God" and the "journey in God" both.

Although Sri Aurobindo had been a revolutionary leader before his conversion, that did not colour his understanding of



the *Bhagvad Gita*. He did not find in the book any open sanction for mass slaughter for any cause, however sacred, and any suggestion to the effect that he differed radically from Mahatma Gandhi on *ahimsa* as a method of political warfare is mere rumour. Indeed he is no antinomian. He wants aspirants to the higher life to rise above good and evil, and even to transcend *sattvic* good, which does not mean that he permits them to fall below good and evil, and to backslide even from humanistic good. In his *Essays on the Gita*, he has explicitly stated that violence is to be eschewed. With him, however, non-violence, like other virtues, should spring from that God-centred equality, *samatvam*, that the *Gita* inculcates.

Turning to the *Life Divine*, we may refer to a few verses from the *Isavasvopanishad* to which he recurs several times in that book, as he does in the *Essays on the Gita* to the verses quoted above. It may be noted that Sri Aurobindo wrote a separate commentary on the *Isavasvopanishad*, and he has done for this *Upanishad* what Sri Gaudapada did for the *Mandukya*. The two in original are among the shortest and the most difficult of the major *Upanishads*, but Sri Gaudapada and Aurobindo's interpretations of these are at once lucid and convincing. The verses of the *Isavasvopanishad* to which Sri Aurobindo has, as we have said, turned at several places in the *Life Divine*, may be translated freely as follows :

Those who pursue the path of *avidya* enter into blind darkness. Into greater darkness enter those who revel in *vidya*...He who comprehends *vidya* side by side with *avidya* attains immortality through *vidya*, having transcended mortality through *avidya*. Those who pursue the path of the Mutable enter into blind darkness. Into greater darkness enter those who revel in the Immutable....He who comprehends the Immutable side by side with the Mutable attains immortality through the Immutable, having transcended mortality through the Mutable.

These cryptic verses will be somewhat clear if we note that by *avidya* is meant what the *Mundak Upanishad* has called *apara*.



*vidya* or “lower knowledge”, that is the knowledge of philosophies and sciences ; by *vidya* is meant speculative knowledge above “lower knowledge” but still below the fruition of what the *Mundak Upanishad* has called *para vidya* or “higher knowledge”. By the Immutable is meant the eternal, unattached, infinite, the featureless Brahman, and by the Mutable the immanent God who creates, sustains and fulfils the worlds. As corrolaries to what has been stated above about *avidya* and *vidya*, it may be observed that the one includes works and forms of worship unillumined by what Brother Lawrence called the “practice of the presence of God”, while the other includes all higher contemplation falling short of genuine *samadhi* or settled superconsciousness. For Sri Aurobindo, religion is not a mere matter of rituals, academic speculation and fitful introversion. A true comprehension of Godhead then is the same thing as before : the elevation of the soul by mental quiescence to Brahman’s poise of the silent, unattached witness, and from that height its expansion into a universal consciousness, and a life of activity outside supported from within by a dispassionate tranquillity. In the life of the gnostic being, or God-lover and God-knower, absolute rest is not only compatible with, but is the sovereign means for, absolute motion.

It should be noted that the verses from the *Bhagavad Gita* and from the *Isavasvopanishad*, that we have quoted above, have not received from other commentators the prominence that Sri Aurobindo has given them. Sankaracarya and Sri Ramanuja have interpreted the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Upanishads* etc. in accordance with the respective schools of thought with which they were associated. But few contemporary scholars have joined issue with Sri Aurobindo over his interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita* or of the *Isavasvopanishad*, and that for the simple reason that he is all-comprehensive and all-inclusive, without being merely syncretistic. It was said of Tolstoi that his art is above art. It seems that Sri Aurobindo’s scholarship of Sanskrit is above mere academic scholarship. His renderings



of a number of *Vedic* texts given at the commencement of different chapters of the *Life Divine* are closely literal, and yet they embody rare religious experiences, without which it would be hard to speak of the *Vedas* as immortal revelations. He does not read in them empirical formulas of physical science, like water being the product of two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen with an electric spark passing through them. He reads in them eternal truths of the Eternal Spirit, which are beyond the ken of the more physical scientist. Few achievements in the world of contemporary letters are so impressive as Sri Aurobindo's short renderings from the *Vedas*.

Sri Aurobindo is a reconciler and unifier of different and even divergent spiritual ideas, like his immediate predecessor in Bengal, Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The latter owed little to book-learning, but his inner light roused by intense *sadhana* had become a burning bush. His example and precept have inspired three generations since his death, and his greatness has been acknowledged by Sri Aurobindo. Both have been among the greatest religious geniuses of the world. Sri Aurobindo found universal religion in the *Vedas*. Unity, qualified unity, and duality take their places in his comprehensive system as different poises of Brahman, who, is infinitely and eternally one-in-many and many-in-one. He shows the underlying compatibility of absolute monism, qualified monism and dualism—the three chief schools of *Vedanta*—with one another. They do not jostle against one another on his canvas. His Godhead is a unity, but this unity abides wholesale after working itself out into astronomical figures. This is the mystery of Saccidananda's *Prakriti-Sakti-Maya*. He is infinite in the sense that His varieties are unnumbered, and yet He exceeds them. He is ever so free that He is not subject to His own liberty. His restfulness does not immobilize Him. His silence does not make Him incapable of speech. Sri Aurobindo asks us to divinize ourselves by annihilating our egoism first and thus paving the way for a true comprehension of our oneness with Brahman, in His



aspects of Being and Becoming both. We have to make ourselves perfect even as He is perfect, restful in His action and active in His restfulness.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the purpose of the descent of God as an *avatara* is the ascent of man towards Godhead. We should ascend by the ladder by which He has descended. This view has also found expression in western mystical literature. As Angelius Silesius has put it :

Through Christ a thousand times  
In Bethlehem be born,  
If He is not born in thee,  
Thy soul is still forlorn.  
The Cross on Golgotha  
Will never save thy soul,  
The Cross in thine own heart  
Alone can make thee whole.

We have thus a two-way traffic provided by the incarnation. God becomes man so that man should become God. The eternal incarnation will descend into every living soul that ascends God-wards. If I shed my I-ness for Him, He will shed His His-ness for me, and the contraries shall meet and interfuse.

In his *Letters*, Sri Aurobindo has propounded his system of *yoga* for the benefit of his disciples and correspondents in particular, and for all aspirants to the higher life in general. It is clear even from a hasty perusal of these letters covering hundreds of pages and packed with practical guidance that Sri Aurobindo's *yoga* aims not only at the ascent of the soul towards what he calls the Super-mind, but also at the descent of the Super-mind into the world.

Some superficial critics set great store by what appears to them as essential difference of out-look between Sri Aurobindo and Sankaracarya. Sri Aurobindo is regarded by them as the very antithesis of Sankaracarya, who they assert was a quietist and never tired of insisting on the illusory character of the ego



and the world. But Sankaracarya's brief career was full of activity and amazing in its sweep. He was a living refutation of all lop-sided quietism. Sri Aurobindo himself has stated that the ego as a separate entity and the world as an existence independent of Brahman are "unreal realities". The phrase "unreal reality" used by Sri Aurobindo is an echo from Sankaracarya. What is, however, important is that while Sankaracarya upheld by precept the ideal of the *sanyasin*, Sri Aurobindo lived this ideal for forty years. Nor did he indulge in any cheap criticism of the theory of *Maya*. There is no easy by-passing of the path described by the *Kathopanishad* to be sharp like "the sword's edge". As Aldous Huxley has pointed out with great force in his *Grey Eminence* and *Perennial Philosophy*, we have to die to "personality" and all its "projections" before we can hope to become "theo-centric". The difference between Sankaracarya and Sri Aurobindo is a difference in methods of representation of the same truth. Both want transformation of the natural man. Indeed, "transform" is Sri Aurobindo's *mantram*.

The essence of Sri Aurobindo's message to the suffering world of to-day may be put below in his own words :

Transform reason into ordered intuition : let all thy self be light :  
this is thy goal !

Transform effort into an even and sovereign over-flowing of the  
soul-strength : let all thy self be conscious-force. This is thy  
goal !

Transform enjoying into an even and objectless ecstasy : let all thy  
self be bliss. This is thy goal !

Transform the divided individual into the world-personality : let all  
thy self be divine. This is thy goal.

Transform the animal into the driver of the herds : let all thy self be  
Krishna. This is thy goal.

( Thoughts and Glimpses )

This message offers the best cure for the malaise of  
civilisation.



Sri Aurobindo wants a total transformation of the individual and humanity from the rational animal to the divine level and that is the fulfilment towards which his *yoga* points. The following lines are taken from his beautiful poem, "Transformation";

I am no more a vassal of the flesh,  
A slave to nature and her leaden rule,  
I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh,  
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,  
My body is God's happy living tool.  
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.

The language of these lines is Sri Aurobindo's, but the vision is also the vision of the seers of the *Upanishads* and of later sages like Sankaracarya.

Sri Aurobindo could not be satisfied with a salvation that would release him with perhaps a few disciples. He aimed at bringing down the kingdom of God on earth. In *The Life Divine*, he recalled the legend of the Buddha who "when he stood at the threshold of Nirvana...took the vow never to make the irrevocable crossing so long as there was a single being upon earth undelivered from the bondage of the ego".

From the silence of God came the Word, and from the Word creation. Who can say that the written words of Sri Aurobindo which came in the wake of his silent meditations in his retirement at Pondicherry will not be followed up by a more wide-spread propagation of his message by his disciples? He visualized a new millenium in which *sadbis* or God-minded men will rule the world in the sense of guiding and directing it. His disciples have succeeded to a great heritage, and they should do something towards fulfilling the prophecy of the master. It may be recalled here that when Rabindranath Tagore went to Sri Aurobindo's *asrama*, he felt the power of the sage and told him, "You have the Word, and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world". It has spoken, but will the world hear it?



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LATER WORKS OF YEATS

*By* MANOJ KUMAR CHATTERJEE

THROUGHOUT HIS EVENTFUL LIFE, Yeats has sought citizenship in an abstract world and it has been his rare privilege to win it. Yet, there is no poet in the modern age who has attained to the stature of Yeats. Mr. Cecil Day Lewis, a younger contemporary of Yeats and a gifted critic with strong sympathies for the Left, makes this position quite clear: "Yeats, the last in the aristocratic tradition of poets, remains the most admired of living writers: none of us can touch his later work and it is too personal in idiom, too insulated to allow an easy communication of powers. He stands a lesson to us in integrity demanding from us a complete subjection to the poetry that occupies us, yet never asking of poetry more than what lies within its proper jurisdiction." Rabindranath also, perhaps, means the same thing when after his first meeting with Yeats in 1912 in London, he wrote, "Yeats stands above his contemporaries—a tall and a noble figure—a poet. Most writers belong to the literary world, Yeats belongs to the world." The personality and the creative penmanship of the great Irish poet can not be better summed up than in these admirable phrases of Rabindranath Tagore.

The most outstanding fact about William Butler Yeats is that unlike other poets who have lived through several generations and endured the inevitable uncertainties of fashion, he did not suffer in reputation from the changing attitude towards art and life. Without great harm to that other reputation which he had gained as far back as the nineties, he found and formed for himself a wider and deeper reputation. During the twenties of this century his fame had been steadily increasing and the widespread recognition of his genius was not disturbed by



discordant voices or belittled by ungenerous criticism. He differed from most of his contemporaries also in this : the astonishing output of poetry which he produced during his last and greatest period has appealed in equal measure, though for different reasons, to those of guarded conservative taste and to those whose sympathies are progressive and not infrequently impatient. This double appeal is all the more remarkable during a period of conflicting standards, rashness and poetic doubt. Such an appeal is not necessarily in itself an unquestionable proof of greatness, since it has often been the product of mere imaginative versatility and contemporaneity. But none has been found to dispute this poet's artistic integrity or to cast doubt on his claim to be in the major succession.

Nevertheless the remarkable attention and appreciation which have been given to Yeats in our own time—a time when ingratitude and acrimony have been the wages of others—are, we may venture to think, as much based on the human element as on the sheer power of his later poetry to command and excite the interest of those who differ in taste and opinion. They have been a tribute to the man as well as the artist : and this was shown by the celebration in 1935 of his seventieth birthday. The tribute of admiration was increased by the rare element of surprise by the fact of an unexpected and indeed heroic achievement. For here was a poet who had both the courage and strength to *remake* himself and at the age of seventy to start, so to speak, all over again :

Grant me an old man's frenzy,  
Myself must I remake  
Till I am Timon and Lear  
Or that William Blake  
Who beat upon the wall  
Till Truth obeyed his call ;  
A mind Michael Angelo knew  
That can pierce the clouds  
Or inspired by frenzy  
Shake the dead in their shrouds ;



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LATER WORKS OF YEATS

Forgotten else by mankind,  
An old man's eagle mind.<sup>1</sup>

Here was a poet with an established reputation who with a dramatic gesture—and the correct dramatic gesture counted for much in his life and art—cast aside a long-used gift and went into what seemed at best a waste land.

The increase and new freedom of expression which the veteran poet found brought with it a new sense of wonder and of heroic mental energy. Twenty two years ago in "The Tower", Yeats, in lines which blended an old and new music, was able to declare—

What shall I do with this absurdity  
O heart, O troubled heart—this caricature,  
Decrepit age that has been tied to me  
As to a dog's tail ?

Never had I more  
Excited, passionate, fantastical  
Imagination, nor an ear and eye  
That more expected the impossible—  
No, not in boyhood when with rod and fly  
Or the humbler worm, I climbed Ben

Bulben's back  
And had the the livelong summer day to spend.<sup>2</sup>

Then, in the same poem, in lines which unmistakably offer a clue to his mental climate, he boldly affirms :

It seems that I must bid the Muse go back  
Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend  
Until imagination, ear and eye,  
Can be content with argument and deal  
In abstract things : or be derided by  
A sort of battered kettle at the heel.

Obviously, in the first passage, we are in the presence of an imagination, experiencing a renewal and once more discovering in tragic haste, the glittering shows of thought and all that

1 An Acre of Grass in *Last Poems and Plays*.

2 *Collected Poems*, p. 218.



richness, that excitement, which our world of phenomena presents to the willing. It is this imaginative unrest, this habit of continual intellectual adventure which gives unusual quality to the later work of Yeats and has kept his poetry fresh, strange and beautiful. In the beautiful words of A. E., "it is one of the rarest things in literature to find a poet of whom it might be said that his wine was like that in the feast in the Scriptures, where the best was kept until the last. \* \* \* It is possible the Muse will forsake us unless we keep the intellect athletic and she will reward us even if we forsake her and go mountain-climbing, if we return to her more athletic than when we left". The later poet is not only intellectually the lord of the earlier poet but that as a stylist there is an amazing advance, yet without any diminution of emotion or imagination. To borrow from A. E. again : "How can one convey any impression of that arrogant yet persuasive mentality, of that style where simplicity and barrenness are suddenly varied by some image rich as a jewel, and we are as delighted by the contrast as if we saw some lovely, gem-bedight queen walking along an undecorated corridor, noble only because of its proportion". Here, in this later poetry, is the justification of the poet's intellectual adventures into philosophy, mysticism and symbolism, into magic and spiritualism and many ways of thought which most people regard as by-ways which lead nowhere. Here we find that we have been following the course of a man who never found himself, who, as new path allured him, persuaded himself that now at last he was going the right away, only to be once more homeless. His superlatively swift and receptive mind could be easily allured but never convinced, though he could for a time mistake allurements for conviction. He found, therefore, no rest and no fulfilment. He eludes us to the end, because he was to the end eluded by himself.

What Yeats badly needed was a spiritual home, a place where he could safely retire in times of crisis and defend himself from "thunder of feet", "tumult of images" and "rage-driven,



rage-tormented and rage-hungry troops". "We poets", he writes to Dorothy Wellesley, "must keep some inner serenity, or we shall all go mad".<sup>3</sup> But alas, this spiritual home, this inner serenity, he very rarely attained; the tragedy of this eternal thwarting of the poet's world by the world we live in was with him a stark reality. Added to this was his pre-occupation not only with his own doom but with the doom of European civilization. His early efforts to acquire a living faith in Irish mythology and fairies, his frequentation of spiritualists, necromancers and astrologers and his continued pre-occupation with Philosophy and Indian thought were certainly in part devices for protecting his imagination. "Science", he tells us in his *Autobiographies*, "I had grown to hate with a monkish hate. In my heart I thought that only beautiful things should be painted and that only ancient things and the stuff of dreams were beautiful".<sup>4</sup> But in Europe as he looked at it, there were only the gaping machine and its vulgarising and brutalising effects; the "beautiful lofty things" were no more, for "money's rant is on". Gone are its aristocracy—its proud and heroic mind—its romance and nobility; only the cheap, the trashy and the ill-made stalk its stage. Yeats feels sick at heart and sinks at last into the very pits of a dark abyss:

Under a broken stone I halt  
At the bottom of a pit  
That broad noon has never lit,  
And shout a secret to the stone.

\* \* \*

And all seems evil until I  
Sleepless would lie down and die.<sup>5</sup>

The lamps are all extinguished in Europe; there is only the lengthening shadow of deep and dark night. "Europe is in the waning Moon; are all those things that we love waning?"

<sup>3</sup> *Letters on Poetry*, P. 74.

<sup>4</sup> *Reveries over Childhood*, *Autobiographies*, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> *The Man and The Echo*, *Last Poems and Plays*, p. 88.



he now asks Lady Dorothy Wellesley.<sup>6</sup> "What then is your solution for all these ills?"—Dorothy asks Yeats. She also records the answer that Yeats gave :

"Dropping his hand which was never still, the brown hand with symbolic ring, upon his knee, in a gesture which to me revealed his moods of despair, he replied : 'O my dear, I have no solution, none'."

What then, is to be done ? It was not quite easy for Yeats to orchestrate but his skill did not fail him. He did not, as did the disillusioned Wells, write an indictment of God as farewell to a ruined world. Saddened, as the generality of poets are, by the transience of joy and loveliness, he did not relapse into pessimism, but asserted the triumph of spirit over the forces of anarchy and chaos :

What matter though numb nightmare ride on top,  
And blood and mire the sensitive body stain ?  
What matter ? Have no sigh, let no tear drop,  
A greater, a more gracious time has gone ;  
For painted forms or boxes of make up  
In ancient tombs I sighed, but not again ;  
What matter ? Out of cavern comes a voice  
And all it knows is that one word "Rejoice"<sup>7</sup>

So the world of *A Full Moon in March* (1935), *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1939), *Last Poems and Plays* (1939), *Letters on Poetry to Dorothy Wellesley* (1940) is a world of tunes, songs and revelry. The poet in all these books is a frank epicurean, taking life as it is, drinking and singing, without caring to probe deeper into the knotty problems of human existence :

You think it horrible that lust and rage  
Should dance attention upon my old age ;  
They were not such a plague when I was young  
What else have I to spur me into song ?<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Letters on Poetry*, p. 128.

<sup>7</sup> *The Gyres—Last Poems and Plays*, p. 8

<sup>8</sup> *The Spur—Ibid.*, p. 87.



Turner is now his favourite poet ; in his ideas, he catches an echo of his own heart and gets a confirmation of his own philosophy of life. So he writes to Dorothy : "Turner has said that 'an intellectual is a man who has discovered how to have ideas without intellect'. However, let us be consoled—wine comes in at the mouth, and love comes in at the eye. I have found, being no intellectual, that even in old age eye and mouth are still there." His own poetry now, as he tells her elsewhere, "comes from rage or lust." His mind is now "lovely" ; he has "new poems that he now longs to write." "I have grown abundant and determined in my old age as I never was in my youth." He has no sense of age, no desire for rest, but then perhaps with him the French saying is true : "It is not a tragedy to grow old, the tragedy is not to grow old." For even in such old age ( perhaps at the age of seventy or seventy-two ) Yeats imagines to himself the joy that a young man feels when he remembers his lady-love and declares :

How can I, that girl standing there,  
My attention fix  
On Roman or on Russian  
Or on Spanish politics ?  
Yet here's a travelled man that knows  
What he talks about,  
And there's a politician  
That has read and thought,  
And may be what they say is true  
Of war and war's alarms,  
But O that I were young again  
And held her in my arms !<sup>9</sup>

Hedonism and Epicureanism can go no farther.

Circumstances give a melancholy interest to the *Last Poems and Plays* ( 1939 ) from the hand of W. B. Yeats, for all of them were written during the last year or so of his life. But the remarkable vigour of thought and imagination which increased

9 Politics—*Ibid.*, p. 82.



with the poet's years is shown here once more. "We watch the poet brooding over the symbols and imaginative signs which prevailed in his work for so many years." In many of these retrospective poems the labour of composition becomes its own drama and difficulties resolve themselves into songs :

I sought a theme and sought for it in vain,  
 I sought it daily for six weeks or so.  
 May be at last, being but a broken man,  
 I must be satisfied with my heart, although  
 Winter and summer till old age began  
 My circus animals were all on show,  
 Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,  
 Lion and woman and the Lord knows what.<sup>10</sup>

Such lines as these, even if they are disturbing to those who expect a deeper commentary on life or on art, must attract the young by their fine gesture. The contrast between youth and age, heroic dream and commonplaces of outer reality is once more pushed to extremes. In choosing beggarly down-at-heel images rather than brand new inventions of a modern world the poet was essentially a romantic.

The book of letters passing between Yeats and Lady Dorothy Wellesley should be read with Yeats's *Last Poems* and his introduction to the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. The correspondence was going on, so we are told by the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*,<sup>11</sup> while Yeats was at work on the Oxford Book and writing his own last poems. Poetically, they felt akin for all their differences. That 'tortuous creature, the modern intellectual' made Dorothy Wellesley 'feel like a child', and so Yeats writes to her : "This difficult work, which is being written everywhere now...has the substance of philosophy and is a delight to the poet with his professional pattern, but it is not your road or mine ; ours is the main road, the road of natural-

<sup>10</sup> The Circus Animals, *Last Poems and Plays*, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> Vide the Editorial, "Wise and Gay", *Times Literary Supplement*, June 8, 1940.



ness and swiftness and we have thirty centuries upon our side. We alone can 'think like a wise man, yet express ourselves like the common people'. These new men are goldsmiths working with a glass screwed into one eye, whereas we stride ahead of them, its swordsmen, its jugglers." There, as we will now recognise, speaks Yeats in his latest phase, 'the wise old man and gay' to whom the "Muses were women who liked the embrace of gay, warty lads." Both of them had withdrawn into air too fine for others to breathe; but not for him, nor for Dorothy, is this grey thin remote gloom of the intellectuals. He and she had swiftness and the lilt of songs in their blood. "It seems to me", writes Dorothy Wellesley, "that poetry is begotten of a tune." "You and I", writes Yeats, "are in history, the history of the mind." And Dorothy Wellesley is urged to watch herself, to prevent any departure from the formula, "Music, the natural words in the natural order." Music will keep out temporary ideas, for "music is the nation's clothing of what is ancient and deathless." Some of it sounds like swashbuckling, the swaggering fancies of a frustrated man in action. But it goes deeper than that. It is the final acceptance. "Joy is the salvation of the soul", and poetry is the assertion of joy. "One reason why these propagandists hate us is that we have ease and power. Your tum-ta-ti-tum is merely the dance music of the ages, they crawl and roll and wallow. You say that we must not hate. You are right, but we may and sometimes must be indignant and speak it. Hate is a kind of passive suffering but indignation is a kind of joy. \* \* \* \* Indeed before all I want to strengthen myself. It is not our business to reply to this and that, but to set up our love and indignation against their pity and hate." Time, I think, has not defeated the poet; the poet rather has defeated Time. The proud spirit goes on making its own youth out of its own time-defying substance. No wonder that it is this proud, heroic spirit of Yeats, moving always in search of new ideas and new thoughts, that has appealed to the younger poets of his generation, caught between frustration and repression, and



inspires them to face the contemporay world of futility, this world of broken hopes and images, with greater courage and determination.

This in itself is a significant achievement which posterity, perhaps, will not willingly let die.

The loss by death is not for Keats who had already reached the classic height of literature while alive. ~~My first~~  
~~meeting with him~~  
 Today my <sup>memory</sup> goes back to the time when I first met Keats full of exuberant life and youthfulness and the same picture of a glowing genius, of a <sup>magnificent</sup> ~~most generous~~ personality, will I am sure will remain unfaded in the memory of all time. <sup>I shall cherish</sup>  
~~The fact~~  
~~will remain dear to me~~ to the end of my days that my life has been linked with the memory of one ~~of~~ of the greatest poets of modern Europe.

Rabindranath's message on the passing away of Yeats



## TAGORE AND YEATS

*By* HIRENDRANATH DATTA

NO TWO POETS could be more akin to each other than Tagore and Yeats. The Irish character in general has always borne a kinship with the Indian ; but besides those on-the-surface similarities there are individual characteristics which seem to give a sort of family likeness to the two poets. Born about the same time but separated from each other by vast distances, they seem to have lived and grown up in a strikingly similar atmosphere. The two poetic minds were nurtured in the same cultural and political climate. Tagore was a mere boy when the first stirrings of national consciousness began to be felt in Bengal and Bankim was building up what might be called a national literature for Bengal. There was a wide-spread movement for revival of Indian thought, Indian art and culture. The political frustration arising out of foreign subjugation naturally sought relief in a socio-cultural revivalist movement.

Ireland, suffering from the same<sup>a</sup> frustration, witnessed a similar movement with a rigid racial bias. Revivalists with their vision blurred by prejudices of all kinds often enough over-shoot their mark. They become nationalistic with vengeance. A literature with an aggressively nationalistic outlook carries within it the germs of disruption. Although the literary scene of Bengal bore a close resemblance to that of Ireland, Bengal was comparatively fortunate in that Bankim gave us the glimpse of a bigger world. The leaders of the Bēngali renaissance were infused with the spirit of Western humanism. Their love for their own land was never tainted by a hatred for England. Renascent Bengal was broader in outlook than rebellious Ireland. Ireland with her more aggre-



ssive nationalism withdrew into a narrower shell seeking inspiration in her own dialect, her age-old tradition and her ancient mythology. As was to be expected, there was more froth than substance in this neo-celtic movement in literature. George Moore's acrobatic feats are a case in point.

Poetry being the language of humanity there can be no room for national self-sufficiency even in a national poet. The moment one starts speaking with a racial bias or partisanship, that universal language degenerates into a regional dialect. Prior to the emergence of Yeats, Irish literature was showing exactly those symptoms of degeneration. Yeats, too, began as a typically Irish poet inheriting from his Druid ancestors the mysteries of what one might call the Celtic Trinity, namely, man, nature and supernatural manifestations. Rabindranath, too, had his brief spell of nationalism but it did not take him long to outgrow that phase. His earlier training ran counter to all that was parochial in outlook. No man was perhaps better trained than Tagore for the great role he was to play in future. Rooted firmly to the great heritage of his country he projected himself into a newer and bigger world from where he constantly drew in long and fresh draughts of inspiration.

A true poet owes allegiance to a larger mind uncircumscribed by racial or geographical limits. In all great literature there is a peculiar force at work. One might call it the centripetal force which draws you towards the centre. That central thing is the universal mind. With the rise in Yeats's stature the centre of gravity shifted from the Irish literary scene to the larger sphere of man. The contours of an Irish landscape lost themselves in an ever-receding horizon and the peculiar problems of Ireland merged in the wider problems of humanity at large. The mind of Rabindranath had passed through the same process of development.

When in 1912 the two poets met in London each discovered in the other a kindred spirit. The Gitanjali manuscript



had burst upon the London literary circle with all the mysteries of the East, the mysteries of an immeasurably strange world, but to Yeats it was "a world I have dreamed of all my life long." He was moved not by its strangeness, but because "we heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream." In a letter to Ernest Rhys he speaks of Tagore as "the most abundant and simple imagination I have met for many years." This quick appraisal of Rabindranath by Yeats was possible because the two mental attitudes were the same. To both of them poetry was a kind of revealed Truth, the validity of which was sanctioned not so much by scientific investigation as by a direct communion with Nature, the store-house of all wisdom. It would appear as if the two poets had a common inheritance—only what Tagore inherited from his Vedic ancestors Yeats did from his Druid fore-fathers. And this common inheritance admitted them both into the three-fold mysteries of Nature, Man and God. I have often felt that quite a few of Yeats's smaller poems could be inserted in *Gitanjali* without anybody detecting they were by another poet so admirably do they suit the mood and tone of *Gitanjali*. Take, for example, that exquisite little poem :

All things uncomely and broken, all things worn-out and old,  
The cry of a child by the road-way, the creak of a lumbering cart,  
The heavy steps of the ploughman, splashing the wintry mould,  
Are all wronging your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of  
my heart.....

This has an unmistakably Tagorean ring about it.

It will be interesting to note in this connection, that while Rabindranath speaks most appreciatively of the intellectual virility of the London *literati*, he deplores certain tendencies that came into prominence in English poetry during the first decade of this century. "Poets seem to have turned into craftsmen", he says in one of his letters written during the time. "Their songs do not well up straight from the heart."



When words no longer spring from genuine passion and mere words beget words, poetry becomes more or less a craft demanding an extra amount of skill in workmanship and virtuosity. The emotional content, having no immediate and direct relation to the heart, is by no means easy to comprehend. It has a strange look about it. Having no confidence in itself it asserts itself with exaggerated vehemence. Devoid of the charm of freshness it seeks to establish its claim to uniqueness by making itself grotesque.”<sup>1</sup> While the bulk of early Georgian poetry left him cold, Yeats’s was the only voice that made a deep impression on him. His reactions to Yeats and his poetry make highly interesting reading.

On his own admission his acquaintance with Yeats’s writings was rather limited at that stage. But the personality of the man immediately struck his fancy. “Yeats”, he says, “is not the man to be lost in the crowd ; his striking personality marks him out from all the rest. With his immensely tall figure he stands a whole head above others. An intense creative impulse informs his entire being, so that in body and mind he gives one the impression of a fountain that rushes upward in an incessant flow of energy.”<sup>2</sup> Although not fully acquainted with his writings Tagore refers especially to the “imaginative conviction” that informed all that Yeats had written. With him, Tagore further states, imagination was not merely a poetic device used in the trade of verse-making, but a living faith that enabled him to draw nourishment from the mysterious universe in which his poetic soul dwelt.

Yeats’s dream-world and Tagore’s mystic-world are both esoteric to some extent ; yet the two are not exactly the same. It has been said that Yeats was a confirmed hater of facts. His world of dreams was more or less a haven of retreat for him. This could hardly be said of Tagore’s mystic world. His mysticism is not altogether divorced from the realities of life.

<sup>1</sup> & <sup>2</sup> Excerpts from an article on W. B. Yeats appearing in पथेर सच्चय, rendered into English by the author of the article.



If there are facts stranger than fiction, there are realities which are stranger than dreams. His mystic world is only the lengthened shadow of this very world, or, in other words, his world of realities is re-created in his imagination into a region where earthly realities do not change their shapes; they only appear more shapely—like forms in a silhouette. These forms are not unreal, one could only call them super-real. Of the two esoteric worlds, Yeats's certainly was less real. It has to be remembered that even in Tagore's spiritualism there is no element of other-worldliness. He had retained his relish for worldly joys till the end of his days.

There was a difference, too, in the nature and quality of their respective romantic ardours. The earlier Rabindranath was an Elizabethan in his zest for life. His romanticism was of a deeper dye than that of Yeats. Yeats's romanticism was of the enervated Victorian type. At a certain stage of development Tagore also showed some weakness for Victorian embellishments of language. The rise of a new generation of disillusioned youth after the first great war sounded the death-knell of romantic poetry. Younger voices in poetry sought to make nonsense of Yeats's romanticism. They spoke in a different language; but the language of disillusion was bound to be the language of sophistication. In Bengal a similar onslaught was made on Rabindranath by younger aspirants to literary fame. But the two great poets remained true to their conviction and survived those attacks. They would not sell their birth-right for a mess of facts; for facts—and for the matter of that contemporary facts—were not the only ingredients for poetry. It is only one step between the orthodox and the ultra-modern; for, both tend to become dogmatic. There was nothing dogmatic in either Tagore or Yeats. So they remained simply modern right through. Yeats of course, was already showing greater awareness of life. The emotional content remaining the same, this awareness gave greater strength and substance to his poetry. It has been rightly said that his Muse grew younger as



he grew older. There is nothing in modern English poetry that can compare with the controlled passion of his later poems, and, in intellectualized siniousity as in *The Winding Stair* he almost rivals Eliot. In Tagore's later poems there is the same undertone of spiritualism as in the *Gitanjali* poems only in a more concentrated, and intellectualized form. It seems both had developed what Yeats called "the old man's eagle mind."

It need hardly be said that Tagore and Yeats are the two most dominant poetic voices of our times. No other poet, during the last hundred years, has shown greater range and development than these two have done. Louis Macneice, a poet of the younger group, says if he were to make an anthology of modern English poetry he would include at least sixty of Yeats's smaller poems, the largest number from any individual poet. That is a very significant statement coming as it does from one of the moderns. It would be interesting to learn from one of our younger poets how Rabindranath would fare in a similar anthology of modern Bengali verse.

Oblivious of what the younger generation thought of them the two poets remained ardent admirers of each other till the end. The friendship which started during the *Gitanjali* days remained as fresh as ever, although the two saw little of each other for long years. Late in life, in moments of quiet, both indulged in nostalgic reveries of that old friendship which, as Rabindranath puts it, "lingers in my mind like the aroma of a rich and rare wine". "I shall always remember", he goes on to add, "the generosity of your simple and sensitive poetic youth which exercised in my mind a profound attraction for your genius." Yeats reciprocates those feelings when, many years later, he seeks to recapture the thrill of their first acquaintance—"what an excitement it was that first reading of your poems which seemed to come out of the fields and the rivers and have their changelessness." In the same letter he adds, "I am still your most loyal student and admirer."



# MYTH AND MODERN POETRY. I: W. B. YEATS.

*By* ALEX ARONSON

A FEW YEARS AGO, a young Bengali poet with whom I was then discussing contemporary poetry, suggested to me that England would once again produce great poets only when she had given up her Empire. He was representative of a group of young progressive writers, some of whom of very outstanding gifts, who felt that English poetry during the last twenty years or so had become increasingly divorced from any commonly accepted frame of reference. They felt that even the left-wing writers spoke a language that was, to a considerable degree, private, and that they used a symbolism based upon esoteric knowledge or a highly sophisticated interpretation of life. It was obvious to me that he was referring, in particular, to the poetry of W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot. Both of them indeed confronted the reader with a set of symbols, recurring in a large number of their poems which, if not altogether unintelligible, required of the reader at least a considerable mental effort. To the young progressive poet of Bengal, who, furthermore, did not consider himself an Empire-builder, it was more than apparent that the frame of reference within which these esoteric symbols were used, was of a suspiciously conservative kind, a frame of reference indeed which took the Empire for granted, or at least which did not question the existence of colonial exploitation and all it implies; in addition both these poets were profoundly influenced by religious motives and had a sincere and undisguised contempt for democratic institutions: Eliot, apart from calling himself an Anglo-Catholic, also called himself a Monarchist, while Yeats buried himself in a Celtic mediaevalism and the "glory" that was ancient Byzantium. And these



young Bengali poets also could not forget that the pundit of modern poetry in England, Ezra Pound, after having written his *Cantos*, ended up as a pro-fascist radio-announcer in Italy during the war. There must be something wrong with a frame of reference, they argued, which led to an interpretation of life so manifestly reactionary, so brutal in its implications, and so callously indifferent to the universal desire for social justice.

On the other hand, however, they very well realized that both Eliot and Yeats had given expression to some of the conflicts that beset an intellectual in the modern world, and that although they differ so widely both in method and in aim, they yet succeeded in creating a kind of poetry which was profoundly contemporary—of course, within the limitation of their frame of reference. Yes, they would argue, given an Empire, colonial exploitation, and an overdeveloped sense of tradition, no better poetry can be written. These poets, they would say, Pound, Yeats, and Eliot, are the Augustans of our age ; they are the flowers of a civilization that has fulfilled itself ; the past alone has the power to inspire them ; their images are those of the past modified so as to fit the present ( an old man putting on the clothes of his adolescence and standing before a mirror admiring himself ) ; the present ; according to them, is senseless and they expect nothing of the future. Yeats's Celtic revival, Eliot's classicism, and Pound's translation from the Provencal and the Chinese, they all point the same way : a traditional frame of reference in a disintegrating context. The context is the society within which the poet lives, the democratic, industrialised, Empire-building, unimaginative society of present-day England. The frame of reference is the Celtic, the Anglo-Saxon, the Classic, the Chinese, the Provencal cultural background, with its feudal or mediaeval or classic mythology.

Obviously these Bengali poets were vaguely conscious of a conflict between context and frame of reference. They probably also must have felt that it was this conflict between the reality and the symbol used to express it, which both repelled and



fascinated them. It is, by no means, accidental, for instance, that some of the most outstanding Bengali poets today use involved symbolism taken from ancient Hindu mythology to express their experience of contemporary life in their poetry.

Never before has the need of a "modern" mythology been felt as much as in our days ; a mythology which would take for granted the collective and anonymous desire for re-adjustment of social values and a revaluation of cultural standards. But it seems that mythologies have a slow way of growing ; they do not spring from the head of a single writer overnight ; perhaps they themselves are the result of collective and anonymous effort lasting many decades ; perhaps every new mythology is only the re-interpretation and re-valuation of an old one ; perhaps even certain human figures characteristic of fundamental human desires and aspirations and longings, have to be re-interpreted and re-valued again and again. Every age, perhaps, has to create its own Ulysses, its own Siegfried, its own Hamlet, in order to adjust the frame of reference to the ever-changing context, the dynamic flux of life. This suggestion, it seems to me, is worth considering in some details.

What did T. S. Eliot imply, when he said in one of his essays : "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone..." ? Did he refer to the historical sense which he says in the same essay is indispensable in all art-creation, or that awareness of the past which makes every poet conscious of the "pastness" of the present ? The "meaning" of a poem, surely, is the sum-total of the symbols used by the poet. Symbols, and that seems to be Eliot's main contention, are the past modified in such a way that it becomes the present, or, in other words, symbols acquire a meaning only in so far as they are rooted in a consciousness of the past. Indeed they do not "have" their meaning alone : as used by the contemporary poet, such symbols should fuse the past and the present into one ; they should have both a traditional meaning and a superimposed contemporary significance. We may add that the poet may use such symbols



deliberately or unconsciously, not being aware at the time of creation of the "past" meanings of the symbols and the way he modified them in the present. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* would be a good instance to the point : for we may assume that Coleridge was hardly conscious of having modified and fused the age-old myth of Ulysses and the Wandering Jew in the person of his own Ancient Mariner. That, incidentally, the contemporary reader at the beginning of the nineteenth century, considered the poem unintelligible and its unconscious symbolism as obscure as readers today with regard to Eliot's poetry, is fairly obvious in the following lines which appeared in the *Critical Review* (Oct : 1798) : "Many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful, but in connection they are absurd and unintelligible. Our readers may exercise their ingenuity in attempting to unriddle what follows... We do not sufficiently understand the story to analyse it..."

It is obviously unfair to select Coleridge to exemplify Eliot's theory about the "modified pastness" of poetic symbols. Modern poets seem to have lost a good deal of the naivete and intellectual innocence which enabled poets in the past to use the myths of bygone ages unconsciously. Poets today, more sophisticated than their predecessors, have first to create their own myth on which to base their poetry. That means, in other words, that they have to "create" their own symbols which, in their turn, will have their meaning "alone". The privacy of meaning of so much modern poetry, even at its best, seems to be the result of a deliberate effort on the part of the poet to supply both myth and poetry. How indeed could the modern poet take any myth for granted? A highly mechanised and socially unstable society has to evolve new myths suitable for an age of transition in which old moral and social values are being questioned. And out of these myths the poet will create symbols which will be meaningful only in so far as they are interpreted in the light of this myth. This seems to characterise modern poetry above everything else : for while the sea-imagery



in Coleridge is perfectly intelligible even to the unsophisticated reader, the symbol of the Moon in Yeats or that of Fire in Eliot, can be grasped only in their full implications within the context of the particular myths created by Yeats and Eliot.

The poet as myth-maker is a peculiarly modern phenomenon. As poet he expresses the awareness of his own age, its conflicts, its aspirations, its failures ; as myth-maker he attempts to create a new frame of reference for the new setting. The symbols he will use in order to portray reality will be intimately related to this frame of reference. What, incidentally, makes Blake so pre-eminently a "contemporary" poet, is his use of symbols taken from the philosophy of Swedenborg and their application to life. Blake's poetry, if seen as a whole, is great not only as poetry but also as myth. That is what distinguishes his myth-creating power from that of Shelley who always attempted to infuse a mythical significance into his symbols ( the cloud, the wind, the skylark ) and never quite succeeded. Blake extracted the symbols out of the myth, his frame of reference, while Shelley only wanted to superimpose a myth upon his symbols, to make his symbols fit into a frame of reference, which indeed was hardly more than a poetical after-thought.

These remarks were necessary for our analysis of Yeats and Eliot as creators of myths. For they indeed follow in the footsteps of Blake : the symbols they use are extracted from their frame of reference, their myth. Therefore, in order to understand their symbols, our analysis has to start with their frame of reference. The case of Yeats is undoubtedly the less complex of the two, however extraordinary his assumptions and conclusions. When Yeats published his essay entitled "A VISION", in 1925, he incorporated therein his frame of reference which remained the guiding spiritual force behind most of his poetry. Here indeed we have a self-created myth, the main purpose of which seems to be to provide contemporary man with a system of values opposed to modern systems of science. What he desired was "a system of thought that would leave my imagination free



to create as it chose", a system, therefore, in which logical and abstract scientific concepts would be replaced by concrete and meaningful symbols.

Yeats's myth or "system" consists of three parts : a picture of history ; an account of human psychology ; and an account of the life of the soul after death. As regards Yeats's picture of history, it resembles a good deal Spengler's cyclic theory ; according to Yeats civilizations run through cycles of 2000 odd years, the rhythm of growth, maturity, and decline always repeating itself. This rhythm is explained by Yeats in terms of the 28 phases of the moon. Our own civilization, he tells us, for instance, is at phase 23 ; the moon is rapidly rounding towards the dark when the new civilization to dominate the next 2000 years will announce itself. Anyone who wishes to analyse for himself the application of this part of Yeats's myth to his poetry, may do so with reference to his poem "The Second Coming" which is directly based upon his cyclic philosophy—a poem of profound and intense fatalism, not unlike Eliot's *Waste Land*. Yeats's system of psychology is no less significant for an understanding of his poetry. According to him, man possesses four faculties mutually opposing each other, producing an intricate tension, a patterning of opposites : there is first the Will and its opposite, the Mask ( the image of what man wishes to be ) ; then there is the Creative Mind, that is all the mind which is consciously constructive, opposed by the Body of Fate ( the physical and mental environment ). Which of the four elements predominates at any given time is again determined by the 28 phases of the moon. It is a psychology founded on the conflict of opposites : the mind which desires the body, the conflict between desire and the thing desired, and in the last poems of Yeats the conflict between the physical and the metaphysical. As regards the life of the soul after death, Yeats thinks that man may be influenced by the dead, the "great collective memory of the world". According to him, again, the soul after death passes through certain cycles in which it re-lives its earthly life, is



freed from pleasure and pain ; from good and evil , and finally reaches a state of beatitude. It then receives the cup of Lethe, and having forgotten all its former life, is reborn in a human body.

Many of Yeats's private symbols, such as the Moon, the Star, the Sword, the Tower, can be grasped only with reference to his cyclic myth. It is interesting to note that only when the Celtic Twilight broke to pieces and Yeats was left standing empty-handed, he wrote "A VISION" and thereby substituted a private myth for a collective myth which was found to be no longer workable. And while the Celtic mythology, at least, emphasised certain commonly accepted values, Yeats's own myth, however tempting its "dialectical" or dualistic character, is yet infused with a determinism which is indeed almost scientific in its rigidity. But then Yeats wanted "rigid symbols" : perhaps he felt that such "rigid symbols" ( the Tower, the Moon, Byzantium ) would provide him with a number of stable points unchanging in the eternal flux of cyclic history. Perhaps he also felt that they would help him in arranging and ordering his experience.

Things fall apart ; the centre cannot hold ;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. . .

he explains in one of his poems. The age is approaching the last phases of the moon : the ultimate darkness before the dawn. Yeats's "rigid symbols" are the only light-points in an ever-darkening universe. It is by means of these "rigid symbols" that Yeats is enabled to cross from one world to another ; from the present to the past and back again to the present. When he imagines himself "Sailing to Byzantium", he is expressing a wish, to renounce "that sensual music" which is the symbol for Byzantium which represents a world of Platonic Forms free from the flux of Becoming. ° The world of Becoming of human beings is a world of "mire and blood", of impermanent and unsatisfying movement. But then we must remember that



"Byzanthium" in Yeats's system of cyclic values, in his myth, stands for one of the early phases of the moon. His cycle teaches us that Becoming is a complement to Being and vice versa and that communication between the two is not only possible but unavoidable, just as in his later poems Yeats discovered that brutality is the complement to Beauty. And yet his symbols remain fundamentally the same, floating somewhere between the two extremes, the only fixed points in a universe subjected to the cycle of growth, maturity, and decay.

Were those young Bengali poets right in criticising Yeats for having abandoned any commonly accepted frame of reference and for having replaced it by a myth of his own making, inaccessible to the average reader? They undoubtedly were right, although with an important qualification: did not Yeats suggest that given a chaotic world, the poet is entitled, if he so wishes, to eliminate some of the chaos, to select and systematise? Did not these Bengali poets overlook that horror of the flux of time that characterises most the best poetry written today? Yeats, just like Eliot, refused to conceive of time as mere succession: some fixed points had to be created so as to make human history understandable once again; so as to concentrate it "at the still point of the turning world". When Yeats created his cyclic myth, he only wanted to infuse meaning and significance into something which otherwise would seem to him intolerable in its futility.

But has not Yeats substituted one system of futility for another? And do not the 28 phases of the moon inspire us with the same sense of frustration as the positivist scientific interpretation of the universe in the nineteenth century? Yes, he has evolved some fixed points; some "rigid symbols" of his own. But such a myth and its symbols should outgrow the personality of the creator. Did Yeats, perhaps, take too much for granted in his cyclic myth? The empire and colonial exploitation, and the caste-system which he wanted to introduce into Ireland, and landed ownership? Was not this esoteric



knowledge, which went to the making of his myth, the overripe fruit of a civilization which has indeed outlived itself and its own past, and has no future to look forward to? For when the present is plunged into chaos such as ours, even the past ceases to have any meaning, and no awareness of the past will provide the poet with the "fixed symbols" he requires.

And so we see him playing with his "figid symbols", trying to give meaning to the meaningless : and as we observe him playing with his fixed light-points in the darkness that he fore-told and of which he is a part, we are deeply moved. For among all the others who gave up in frustration or conventional acceptance of the inevitable or who took refuge in a little convincing virility, he alone, like Tom the Lunatic in Yeats's poem of that name, has still that faith in something stable though in flux, beautiful though brutal ; dying and yet still growing "in all the vigour of its blood". And though the myth, and the twenty-eight phases of the moon leave us cold, we are persuaded by the poetry.



RAMMOHAN ROY  
AND  
THE IDEAL OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

By SAROJ KUMAR DAS

EDUCATION, in the words of one of the foremost figures in the intellectual world of to-day, is "the guidance of the individual towards a comprehension of the art of life. Each individual is nothing but an embodiment of this adventure of existence. The art of life is the guidance of this adventure". Viewed in this perspective, all true education in its essence must be *religious*—not, however, in a dogmatic or credal denotation but in an ethical connotation, as inculcating Duty and Reverence. Duty proceeds from knowledge that endows us with power over the present and control over the future course of events; while Reverence originates from the perception that the present contains within itself the sum-total of existence, backwards and forwards. Neither the traditionalist nor the futurist can possibly impart that educational guidance which the modernist alone can, provided he has a proper sense of values of life. That is to say, all true education must be, despite the paradox, *religiously* secular.

Gifted with a remarkable sense of values, or what is more to the point, the prophetic insight of a philosophical modernist, Rammohan Roy truly foresaw the line all educational mission was bound to take in this ancient land of ours. It is instructive to note the accredited testimony of Dr. George Smith who has it on record in his biography of Dr. Alexander Duff, the Scottish missionary and founder of the General Assembly's Institution. Having listened to the young Scotsman's orientation of the educational mission he was embarking upon, Rammohan



Roy, we are told, "expressed general approval. All true education, the reformer emphatically declared, ought to be religious, since the object was not merely to give information, but to develop and regulate all the powers of the mind, the emotions, and the workings of the conscience"—in a word, an individual life in the integrity of its being. Herein we discover the germ-plasm, the seminal force, the fruitful idea, "matured to inspiration", of that educational mission which was destined to materialise in the genial atmosphere of popular support. Unworthy legatees, as we are, of the elevating trust, we have failed to rise equal to the height of the ideal envisaged by the Raja. The history of English education in British India, since the delivery in 1823 of the historic letter of Rammohan to Lord Amherst, furnished only an ironical commentary on the educational mission he had set his heart upon. No more revealing testimony to the doubtful utility or—shall I say—splendid futility of the educational policy pursued for about a century and a quarter than what we have as the concluding reflection of the historical survey of English education in India contributed by Mr. H. G. Rawlinson with the added authority of his position. "But the greatest wrong", as he writes in a penitent vein, "inflicted on India by our educational policy has been on the spiritual side; we have uprooted a system based upon the traditional code of ethics in the East—the reverence of the pupil for his teacher, the inculcation of knowledge as a religious obligation, and the conception of *dharma* or duty. We have divorced religion from education. 'They asked for bread and we gave them a stone'!"

The story of this epoch-making experiment of introducing in India a Western education through the medium of English makes an instructive, though none the less sombre, reading. The general instability and turmoil of the period in between the break-up of the Mughal Empire and the consolidation of the British settlement precluded the very possibility of education and enlightenment of the children of the soil. Accordingly, the policy of drift, euphemistically called the policy of 'strict religious



neutrality' had been pursued until 1811 when Lord Minto, the then Governor-General pointed out with evident concern "that unless Government interpose with a fostering hand, the revival of letters may shortly become hopeless for want of books or persons capable of explaining them." He therefore proposed that the Court of Directors should earmark suitable grants for the re-organisation of Sanskrit and Islamic learning in and through Sanskrit *Vidyalyaya* or Muslim *Madrassa*, the earliest of the kind being the one founded by Warren Hastings in 1781. At the time of renewal of the Company's charter in 1813, a saving clause was inserted, through the benevolent efforts of Wilberforce and Charles Grant, stipulating the annual expenditure of a lac of rupees "for the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India" and "for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences". It has been authoritatively held, and not without justice, that this Government measure marks an epoch in the educational history of the land in as much as it implements "the first legislative admission of the right of education in India to participate in the public revenues". The first Government grant for education in England, be it noted, was not made until 1833, that is to say, just two decades later. Now, this legislative measure, charged as it was with far-reaching possibilities, proved nevertheless a luckless legacy to all contemporary or subsequent educational ventures—particularly, in the creation and perpetuation of those two warring schools of thought and culture, rightly labelled as "Anglicists" and "Orientalists". Confessedly, the Act, on account of the inherent ambiguity in its wording, stood at the cross-roads. The first part, relating to the "encouragement of the learned natives of India", clearly pointed in the direction of State patronage of Oriental learning, while the latter, advocating "the introduction of a knowledge of the sciences", obviously suggested official encouragement of Western education and all that it stood for.

Despite the formal avowal of a pious intention of this



kind, the resolution could not be immediately given effect to on account of the pre-engagement of Government finance in war with Nepal and successive campaigns against the Marathas and the Pindaris. It was the foundation in 1817 of the Anglo-Indian or Hindu College in Calcutta (which later developed into Presidency College) that marked the inauguration of English education in the country. Although the chief credit for the establishment of the College goes to David Hare of hallowed memory, he was actively assisted therein by Rammohan Roy who was, as we have it on documentary evidence, "the prime mover in founding the Hindu College". The reason why he chose to remain in the background was that "the leading Hindus of Calcutta disliked his association with it, as he was regarded by them as a heretic and more of a Mussalman than a Hindu. Rammohan, therefore, very wisely, withdrew from the movement, lest the objects of the institution should be frustrated in consequence of his name appearing on the Committee of Management".

It was not until 1823 that a Committee of Public Instruction was appointed to determine on what lines the educational grant of a lac of rupees, sanctioned ten years back, could profitably be spent. The Committee consisted of senior civilians, majority of whom were members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and imbued with enthusiastic admiration for Classical Oriental scholarship. From the composition of the Committee it was easy to forecast what the decision was going to be. These, æsthetically disposed, orientalising Englishmen were, however, pleased to direct that the fund should be devoted to the foundation of a College for the promotion of Sanskrit language and literature. The proposal evoked forthwith a spirited protest from Rammohan Roy, the leader of the progressive party of "Anglicists", who addressed direct to the then Governor-General, Lord Amherst, his historic letter of dissent. He had the moral courage—the courage of his conviction—to challenge herein the motive behind what



he considered to be a sinister move on the part of the Government. Having impressed on the Governor-General "the futility of loading the minds of youths with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of no practical use" and in general "with such knowledge as had been current in India 2000 years ago", Rammohan lodged his emphatic protest with unassailable logic in words that would bear quotation even now : "If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian Philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of Schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British Legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning, educated in Europe, and providing a college furnished with necessary books, implements and other apparatus."

The historic letter, which may still be regarded as the *magna carta* of the National Planning of Education for Modern India, naturally evoked a flutter in the official devecots. They sought to parry the home thrust with a huff which could deceive none as to its efficacy. The letter which in the opinion of Bishop Heber, the then Metropolitan of India, who handed it over to Lord Amherst, was "for its good English, good sense and forcible arguments" "a real curiosity as coming from an Asiatic", drew forth from the President of a General Committee of Public Instruction the scathing condemnation that "it was entitled to no reply, as it has disingenuously assumed a character to which it has no pretensions. The application to Government against the cultivation of Hindu literature, and in favour of the



substitution of European tuition, is made professedly on the part, and in the name, of the natives of India. But it bears the signature of one individual alone, whose opinions are well-known to be hostile to those entertained by almost all his countrymen. The letter of Rammohan Roy does not, therefore, express the opinion of any portion of the natives of India, and its assertion to that effect, is a dereliction of truth, which cancels the claim of its author to respectful consideration". Here one is tempted to exclaim; "Look on this picture and on this"! The signature of this 'one individual alone', like that of another *Athanasius contra mundum*, far from cancelling its claim to respectful consideration, has entitled it to a nation's grateful homage that is writ large across the face of the nineteenth century Renaissance in India. Anyway this is what should be; for all great men in history have been more honoured by divergence than by obedience!

When all is said and done, the thing remains that Rammohan Roy's letter was not answered—for the simple reason that it was unanswerable. It is destined to go down in history as the first serious criticism of the Government policy to patronise Oriental learning at the expense of English education, and thus to perpetuate the cultural isolation into which India, with her characteristic genius for a cultural synthesis, had been unwarily betrayed. From this age-old bondage of isolation Rammohan Roy felt himself commissioned to emancipate his country, and without caring either for frown or favour from any quarter, Rammohan espoused what was up till then a forlorn cause and stood out in solid singleness of devotion to an ideal of cultural nationalism, of which the pseudo-orientalism of the civilian members of the Asiatic Society and the Committee of Public Instruction on the one hand and the aggressive 'anglicism' of the young collegians under David Hare, Derozio and Captain Richardson on the other, may be called a bare caricature. Though himself a Sanskrit scholar of first-rate importance, he had yet that scholarly detachment to acknowledge the



insufficiency of Sanskrit learning in a system of modern culture.

It is no wonder that critics, from far and near, who were but small men unable to rise to the height of his towering intellect, would charge Rammohan's advocacy of English education with the sinister motive of "denationalisation" of India, and openly class him with Duff and Carey, Marshman and Ward, and even with Trevelyan and Macaulay as being their Indian forerunner ! Evidently it has never occurred to these competent critics that it is only a rich man who can afford to wear a bad coat. Just as a good wine needs no bush, even so a thorough-bred nationalist needs no pose of Orientalism. In their frenzied zeal these critics conveniently forgot the edifying sentiment, cherished by Rammohan towards the cultural achievements and inheritance of this ancient land of ours, and publicly enunciated by him in fighting all types of jingoism, whether of the Asiatic or the European brand. In words of transparent sincerity that give the lie direct to the supposed "denationalisation" of his educational policy, Rammohan Roy has proclaimed to the world his deep veneration for Indian thought and culture, and his qualified acceptance of European learning as conveyed through the medium of English education. To one of his critics, signing himself 'A Christian', and denouncing 'Asiatic effeminacy' and extolling the English for the diffusion of the 'Ray of Intelligence' over a benighted land, Rammohan sent the effective reply : "If by the 'Ray of Intelligence' for which, the 'Christian' says, we are indebted to the English, he means the introduction of useful mechanical arts, I am ready to express my assent and also gratitude ; but with respect to Science, Literature, or Religion, I do not acknowledge that we are placed under any obligation ; for by a reference to history it may be proved that the world was indebted to our ancestors for the first dawn of knowledge, which sprang up in the East, and thanks to the Goddess of Wisdom, we have still a philosophical and copious language of our own, which distinguishes us from other nations who cannot express



scientific or abstract ideas without borrowing the language of foreigners."

In such an edifying context it is nothing short of graceless sacrilege to doubt or question the sincerity of Rammohan's motive and, what is more offensive, to insure his position in the questionable company of Macaulay and his Anglophile brotherhood. In the face of protests, direct and indirect, from individuals of diverse cultural persuasions, the plan for the foundation of the Sanskrit College went ahead under the fostering care of the Committee for Public Instructions, composed exclusively of Englishmen. This strange anomaly drew forth from Mr. Howell the remark that "it is one of the most unintelligible facts that, at the very time when the people themselves were crying out for instruction in European literature and science and were protesting against the prevailing Orientalism, a body of Englishmen, appointed to initiate a system of education for the country, was found to insist upon the retention of Oriental to the exclusion of European learning". This extra-ordinary zeal for Oriental learning received a temporary set-back from the decision of the Directors to recruit, for public service, Indians educated after the English system—a decision which came in for immediate enforcement by the Governors of Madras and Bombay. What, on the other hand, served to administer an ill-conceived snub to the efforts of the Committee was the despatch of the Directors in 1824, believed to have been drafted by James Mill, recommending the promotion of useful learning in lieu of the Oriental, which "contained a great deal of what was frivolous, not a little of what was mischievous, and only a small remainder in which utility was in any way concerned." The underlying spirit of this invidious document was the unacknowledged source of inspiration for the far more provocative Minute of 1835 by Macaulay in which he made out a case, with his characteristic love of paradoxes and superlatives that English was more useful than Sanskrit, that the Government had never given any pledge to encourage Oriental studies to the exclusion of Western learn-



ing and that students of Sanskrit and Arabic had to be awarded stipends while those who were anxious to learn English were willing to pay fees. In the matter of settling that historic dispute between the Anglicists and the Orientalists, Macaulay's intervention has been assigned an importance which his celebrated Minute clearly belies ; and, as the competent author of *The Education of India* observes, "his intervention was late, and the forces which he represented would probably have been successful without his singularly tactless and blundering championship".

It would be the height of impertinence, therefore, to place Rammohan in the same category with David Hare and Alexander Duff, Trevelyan and Macaulay and even the famous "Serampore trio". With all his advocacy of English education, Rammohan had never envisaged the possibility, not to speak of the desirability, of the drastic "root and branch" method of educational reform countenanced by the former group. Even on making due allowances for the farsightedness of their policy, one must yet observe that these Englishmen had hardly any misgivings about the merits and excellence of their own institutions and drifted into the hasty conclusion that what worked well in England would work equally well in India. Rammohan had the insight to perceive—what now passes for a truism—that an educational system in order to be fruitful must be a distinct out-growth of the social structure or the cultural heritage of a nation. In this Rammohan's instinct guided him right, and thus only could he, with unerring precision, avoid the pitfalls with which the lonesome march was over-run. That we are fallen on evil days and by evil tongues surrounded is proved to demonstration by the sordid attempt in unexpected quarters to drag him down to the level of mediocrity and clothe him with the characteristic failings and weaknesses of the average man. Failing to respond to the disciplinary uplift of his educational mission, these biased critics seek relief and comfort in denouncing it as a move for



'denationalization'! But history has judged it otherwise. As early as in 1888, at the memorial meeting convened on the occasion of the fifty-fifth anniversary of his death, Surendranath Banerjee, the grand patriarch and high-priest of Indian nationalism, with the added authority of his position as the prophet of a 'Nation in the Making', acclaimed Rammohan Roy as "the most gifted representative of the age" and declared in all seriousness and sincerity: "Our national life may be said to flow from him as from a fountain. His labours have shaped the whole course of national development." What was a full and frank recognition, a just and balanced estimate, an assessment, as much retrospective as it was prospective, could not have in course of half a century turned into its opposite; for, it is one of those "truths that wake to perish never."

While discoursing about his nationalism or nationalist policy in education, it is incumbent on us to enquire in what sense exactly Rammohan Roy understood the expression. We do him no justice, we presume, in supposing that he had no patience, far less sympathy, with any exclusive cult of nationalism, fostering a separatist or segregationist mentality and forging the fetters of a self-imposed isolation in a social, economic, political, or cultural reference. As a pioneer humanist, as a high-priest of internationalism, he would look upon nationalism as a halting station, a wayside inn, the penultimate stage on the way of progressive realisation "that all mankind are one great family of which numerous nations and tribes existing are only various branches," to quote from his famous letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, France.

His was thus a nationalism that was absolutely *sui generis*. Paradoxical as it may sound, it would be nearer the mark to characterise it as a national internationalism. His eventful life was one long-drawn commentary on the creed of his heart, and his sinking unto final rest in a land other than that of his birth was perhaps symbolic of the cosmopolitan faith of Rammohan as a 'citizen of the world', a citizen after all of 'no mean



city'. This legacy of nationalism from the "Father of Modern India" attained its natural, self-conscious expression in the inspiring message preached to the world at large by Mahatma Gandhi, the accredited Father of the Nation. With his characteristic brevity, which is the soul of wit, Gandhiji, in response to Dr. Julian Huxley's invitation for the gift of his ideas to UNESCO on the "world-charter of human rights" wrote ( in May, 1947 ) to the effect that "the very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world"! Verily, it was his last will and testament—a testament, withal, of beauty that is native to the magnanimity of a noble soul, such as was his,—to the disunited and distracted nations of the world. Probably the truest representation of his nationalism is to be obtained from the pen-portrait of Rammohan Roy by his English biographer, Miss Sophia Dobson Collet, who with her feminine intuition seized the secret of his genius and rendered it in words of undying memory :

"Rammohan stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between superstition and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and a conservative progress.....*He was a genuine outgrowth of the old Hindu stock; in a soil watered by new influences, and in an atmosphere charged with unwonted forcing power but still a true scion of the old stock. The Rajah was no merely occidentalized Oriental, no Hindu polished into the doubtful semblance of a European. Just as little was he, if we may use the term without offence, a spiritual Eurasian. If we follow the right line of his development, we shall find that he leads the way from the orientalism of the past, not to, but through Western culture, towards a civilization which is neither Western nor Eastern but something vastly larger and nobler than both*". That is just the reason why Rammohan Roy over-rides by



virtue of his compelling greatness all misrepresentations, whether wilful or not, of his towering personality and genius. "Our futility in this direction is", in the memorable words of Rabindranath Tagore, "in the measure of the greatness of Rammohan Roy."



## TIME IN TAGORE'S POETRY

By PRABAS JIVAN CHAUDHURY

THOUGH A POET, concerned with glorifying the fleeting particulars, is no philosopher dealing with bloodless and timeless categories yet he, by a peculiar irony of fate, cannot really avoid the coils of the categories. A little depth-analysis of his poetry reveals a set of these colourless universals. A poet, as a poet, implicitly sets forth his attitude towards these in his poetry while he may do this explicitly as a philosopher in his other writings either prose or verse. A poet may be engrossed by a certain set of categories more than another. Thus we have Shakespeare toiling, in his tragedies, with Evil and Waste, and Milton with God, Satan, Fall and Redemption,—all ethical categories; Wordsworth seeking man's refuge from a world of change and distractions in the Spirit of Nature and Keats in eternal beauty that is truth, while Shelley stakes his all on Justice and Love. Browning, the last of the English titans, is obsessed by the principles of Life as expressed through the intellect and emotions, and of Love conquering Evil. All these poets, excepting Keats, have been pre-eminently human, occupied mainly with ethico-spiritual categories. Keats is more abstract and metaphysical, being most impressed by the problem of change and eternity. His sensuous love of beauty is an expression of his desire to escape from the changing world of understanding to a changeless one of unreflecting intuition. 'O for a life of sensations rather than of thought !' If Shelley be called a poet of love, Keats may be aptly called a poet of time though it may sound rather dry and unfamiliar. To dub Tagore a poet of time is to court danger from his appraisers who hold him to be a poet of love and humanity, of pity and liberation. But even without so



dubbing, one may show that at least one of the basic principles involved in and determining Tagore's poetry, is his metaphysic of time. His attitude towards time developed with his poetry in which it found expression sometimes somewhat directly ( as in *Balaka* ) but mostly very remotely though unmistakably. Time being a dominant factor in our experience, no poet can wholly elude it in his poetry which he constructs on the materials of experience. The phenomenon of change, mostly in the form of death and decay, has brought out from poets different kinds of responses which coloured their poetry in varying degrees. But the response of an individual poet is seen to be largely single ( and not multiple or complex ) and the colour it imparts to his poetry is mostly uniform. Most poets resent time for its destruction of good things of the world, above all life and love ; some seek to mitigate the evil by pointing to some purpose or the other that it serves for the Soul and God that are held as immortal ; while some other poets look on time as a side-show unaffecting the eternal verities. Tagore's attitude to time is delicately variegated and characterised by a gradual development from naive wonder and resentment to a complete reconciliation.

The *first* obvious reaction to time and change is a sense of wonder and despair at the paradox that a thing is yet is not. Thus 'youth turns pale and spectre-thin' and love and joy are momentary, life is a passing show and world a flux. Nothing stays, so that there is no self-identical thing in the world but momentary phases. Almost all the poets have expressed this aspect of time and reacted with wistful wonder. Tagore finds it a heart-rending mockery of fate that we can never transcend conjugal love though we see it ever followed by satiety and weariness.<sup>1</sup> In a moment of weariness and disgust one laughs and weeps for pity when one remembers the consuming desire of the youth bursting with life.<sup>2</sup> Detailed and matchless descrip-

1 केन ? in कड़ि ओ कोमल ( 1886 ).

2 मोह *Ibid.*



tion of fervent and sublime love gradually losing itself in dull monotony of a forced imitation of love as it finds fulfilment, is to be found in two poems in the form of monologues after the style of Browning.<sup>3</sup>

The *second* and very common reaction to time is a wistful lingering look behind, a pining for the past, sometimes because it was glorious but sometimes simply because it is past. Thus there are poems wailing and yearning for the love that is but a memory now<sup>4</sup> and also poems of loving wonder at some past event either historical or legendary.<sup>5</sup>

The *third* response to time is a reaction to the previous one, it is a desire to get over the rather enervating engrossment in the past, morbid sighing for what is not. The poet now looks not behind but forward.

Away with thee O Past, go hence and leave us...  
veil thy face, depart with all thy joys and sorrows,  
cast not such frequent longing looks behind : here  
is no dwelling place for thee, with eyes fixed upon the  
infinite, dissolve slowly away in the dark.<sup>6</sup>

Again,

Let him, who goes take with him all he has,  
leaving no trace of his name behind.<sup>7</sup>

But this bold determination to forget the past and live in the present and the future cannot stand the continuous onslaught of the consciousness of mutability, the simple but inexorable truth that the new which the poet rings in is to be very soon relegated into the past as old, and so infected with transitoriness. The excited anticipation and enjoyment of the new

3 नारीर उक्ति and पुरुषर उक्ति written in 1887 published in मानसी ( 1890 ).

4 भूले, भूल-भाङ्गा in मानसी ।

5 मेघदूत ( 1890 ) वृष्टि पदे टापुर टुपुर ( 1886 ).

6 पुरातन in कड़ि ओ कोमल ( 1886 ). This and the other passages from the poet's Bengali poems ( excepting those from *Gitanjali* and *Fugitive* ), used in the essay, are translated by Indira Devi Chaudhurani.

7 नूतन *Ibid.*



is therefore marred by an apprehension of its inevitable end, the fear that 'new love cannot pine beyond to-morrow' damps the philosophical lover's spirits beforehand and evaporates his desire for fulfilment of love. Thus Keats envies the lover, carved on the Grecian Urn, pursuing his coy beloved, for though he can never get her he would also never see the bitter end of love and lose her. Tagore expresses the disappointment and regret of lovers for their impulsive and short-sighted yielding to love's craving for expression and fulfilment. Even unrequited love is deemed better than the quick-dying requited one.<sup>8</sup> But love conceived in the heart ever seeks to uncover itself, express itself through words and worship, and with the help of physical beauty seeks consummation. This is therefore the paradox of fulfilled love or, as a matter of fact, of any temporal value,—it cannot be easily foregone and it cannot be long enjoyed. The poet, baffled by this predicament, leaves the actual world of love and seeks satisfaction in an imaginary world. This is the *fourth* grade of response to time and is marked by escape and fantasy. Thus Keats prizes the changeless world carved on the Grecian Urn and that imagined to be in the possession of the Nightingale, the fantasy-world, again, of the gods and goddesses he loved so well to depict, Endymion, Cynthia, Moneta, Psyche and Hyperion. It is a world of art, where things are lifted into a rarified atmosphere and seen in their eternal aspect, that the time-stricken poet, perplexed in the extreme, seeks as his refuge. Tagore seeks it in such imaginary realms as Alaka, the home of the banished Yaksha of *Meghdut*, and the soft oblivious lap of mother earth, where *Abalya* passed a million years,—a life at one with the mother.<sup>9</sup> At Alaka the separated beloved of Yaksha eternally sits and pines for her banished lover in a never-ending moon-lit night amidst ageless flowers of a perennial spring. That is the heaven of love and beauty to which

8 व्यक्त प्रेम (1888) in मानसी।

9 मेघदूत (1890), अहल्या written four days after.



the marvellous imagination of Kalidas takes his readers. In these imaginary pictures certain values are seen as freed from the onslaught of time. Thus in *Meghdut* pain of separation in love, thought to be a supreme experience, and in *To Abalya*, a life lived at one with mother earth, are seen as time-free. The latter value finds a fuller expression in a poem, *Vasundhara*<sup>10</sup> ( Mother Earth ), written three years after *To Abalya*. The poet imagines this present individual life to be an off-shoot of a long stretched life in organic unity with mother nature and rich with variegated experience. The craving for the continuous life-stream is one of the main-springs of the poem, the other being a desire for a richer and vaster life-experience.

These four grades of response to time are found in the first seven years of the poet's early though mature poetry, from 1886 to 1893.<sup>11</sup> They show amongst themselves a slight development in time. The last one is a search for the timeless in the imaginative recreations. But, as Keats observed, 'Fancy cannot cheat us so well as she is famed to do', and the poet with his sense of reality and undaunted spirit of enquiry does not find in the merely poetical ( i. e. imaginary ) a lasting solution of his difficulties with time and a haven for his perplexed mind. He moves out of his temporary resting place and faces the problem afresh. His facing is not an attack now, his previous experience has taught him patience and tact and has mellowed his spirit. He does not show any marked response for quite a long period and seems to accept time and change with a quiet resignation. Mutability does not pain him now, for he sees only change from one value to another and not from value to disvalue. Death and decay and weariness in love do not obsess him any more, he seems warily to shift his position and dodge them in order to attack them in some opportune hour when he will be better equipped. Meanwhile he observes 'and

10 वसुन्धरा ( 1893 ) in सोनार तरी ( published in 1894 ).

11 From कड़ि ओ कोमल to सोनार तरी ।



delights in the transitory gleams of love and beauty that time-bound life can afford, he is glad for their appearance and does not mind their disappearance which imparts an added beauty to the particular instances.<sup>12</sup> And then he grows into a state of mind in which he positively defies to be daunted by time and determines to make the most of a moment and be quite satisfied. He celebrates the momentary<sup>13</sup> and sings of

Those that come and go, laugh and look, those that  
glance not behind, but dance merrily forward without any  
question, those that bloom and fade in a fleeting moment.

He bids us not to record history of rushing events that are best left to their oblivious fate, not to seek in vain whatever is gone and lost. Fill your ephemeral life with fleeting joy—advises the poet. And in the poems that follow he shows his delight in the transient moments of beauty without any thought of prolonging them, nay, rather happy for their momentariness. (This is his *fifth* grade of response to time).

But this exaltation of the momentary cannot be an ultimate position that a reflective mind can adopt in the face of time which one wants to conquer not by a mood only but also by thought. How can the values be saved from the pillage of this relentless spirit? Everything cannot be saved, one has to submit. 'Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes' nor love and youth hold their own against Time's fell hand; all temporal goods must droop and drown. Yet something may still elude the sway of time, something that is not born in time, God and Soul. 'Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure'<sup>14</sup> insisted Browning, and again, 'What's time? leave Now for dogs and apes! Man has Forever!'<sup>15</sup> Perception of this

<sup>12</sup> See poems in चैताल (1895), e. g. दुर्लभ जन्म, खेया, दिदि, परिचय, क्षणमिलन, सज्जी, करुणा

<sup>18</sup> उद्बोधन in क्षणिका (1900).

<sup>14</sup> Rabbi Ben Ezra.

<sup>15</sup> A Grammarian's Funeral.



truth affords relief and courage to the time-stricken mind. Tagore reaches this position in his *Naivedya* (1901) where he realizes the eternity of God and human soul<sup>16</sup> and that man's ephemeral temporal existence and his momentary experiences are but emanations or expressions of a timeless spirit. This philosophical faith gives the poet strength and peace and he now treats death and separation with a quiet vigour and sweet understanding.<sup>17</sup> The human soul is on an eternal pilgrimage through ever new and strange realms of beauty; the temporal (the earth and human experiences) is but a playground for the soul that ever seeks God with love in and through his creation.<sup>18</sup> Thus the temporal values are also given their due credit, though they change and fly they are sanctified by the touch of the Eternal Being and are necessary for the soul's play of love with God. Keats held that the world is a vale of soul-making but for Tagore it is a vale of God-seeking. And time becomes the vestment of the Timeless as Carlyle observed.<sup>19</sup>

This solution arrived at in *Naivedya* is the poets' essential poetic answer to the problem of time. In song after song (in *Gitanjali*, *Gitimalya* and *Gitali* written between 1908 and 1914) he expressed in various moods and manners the same solution of the oppressive riddle, and so satisfying is it that in the gladness of his heart he almost forgets the disturbing presence of the problem. When the finished and all-comprehensive principle to combat the menace of time is grasped, time ceases to be a menace and the sense of combat gives place to sweetness and love. When light is brought darkness vanishes and it seems there was nothing to fight or drive away. A few illustrations of this grade (*sixth* in order) of response

16 See particularly the poems जनारण्य and मृत्यु ।

17 देहलीला, अज्ञाते, मुक्ति ।

18 Poems of स्मरण (1902) and poems भरण-मिलन and जन्म ओ मरण in उत्सव (1908).

19 Also *Isopanishad*, 1st. sloka.



to time may be given. The very first song of English *Gitanjali* may be cited.

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.....

... ..

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

As the human soul ever seeks God, He too comes nearer the devotees :

By what dim shore of the ink-black river, by what far edge of the frowning forest, through what mazy depth of gloom art thou threading thy course to come to me, my friend ? ( *Gitanjali* 23 ).

... ..

Have you not heard his silent steps ?

He comes, comes, ever comes.

Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes. ...

In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joy to shine. ( *Gitanjali* 45 ).

I know not from what distant time thou art ever coming nearer to meet me. Thy sun and stars never keep thee hidden from me for aye. ( *Gitanjali* 46 ).

Time and space ( together making the physical world called in Sanskrit *Jagat*, meaning what moves on ) are created for the play of hide and seek between God and the human soul.



to be possible. The world separates the two, yet through it do the lovers seek each other. This play ( *lila* ) between timeless spirits in never-ending time ( time-ful eternity ) is the ultimate reality according to all dualistic ( particularly *Vaishnava* ) philosophy and Tagore's poetic experience is pivoted on it. But his philosophical creed, it may be mentioned, goes a step farther. He believes in the One without a second and without a form, the Absolute spirit of Vedanta. From this stand-point the play of hide and seek and the world of space-time become a make-believe ( *maya* ) and, so, the poetic experience of Tagore assumes the status of an order of reality lower than the one his philosophy offers us. But a philosophy of space-time from a non-dualistic stand-point has not been worked out by Tagore himself and, moreover, there may be various alternative interpretations of the concepts of One and *maya*, so that it would be gratuitous on our part to assert anything about Tagore's ultimate philosophical answer to the problem of time. ( Besides, in the present study we are not concerned with it. Our concern is the view expressed in Tagore's poetry, one that represents, in a way, more truly his real position than any of his intellectual speculations ).

In the poems of *Gitanjali* and others following them the poet finds his ultimate principle to quieten the problem of time. But as has been observed, he is so delighted with the intrinsic truth and beauty of his principle that the problem no more appears before him. It dissolves, as it were, in the solvent of the principle of eternity ; the poet is absorbed in eternity, enjoying the eternal play between God and his soul on the playground of this temporal world. Time does not distract him now, it is completely won over. Once a strange and intractable entity, it now becomes an intimate and helpful spirit serving a cosmic purpose. It works unobtrusively so much that the poet hardly notices it. But after a short period the poet, secure in the delightful position he has reached, turns his mind towards time again. Some of the poems of *Balaka* ( 1914-15 ) represent



this stage ( the *seventh* and the last ) of the poet's response to time. Here he seems to understand time and change through a kind of philosophical intuition which is neither purely intellectual nor purely and passively intuitive. Time is concerned as a dynamic and vital principle that keeps life and matter from stagnating ; change is a necessity in the psycho-physical world. The poet addressess time variously, as a great river, as a restless spirit and an eternal fugitive.

Your fleeting steps kiss the dust of this world into  
sweetness, sweeping aside all waste ; the storm centred  
with your dancing limbs shakes the sacred shower of  
death over life and freshens her growth.....  
Should you in sudden weariness stop for a moment,  
the world would rumble into a heap, an encumbrance,  
barring its own progress, and even the least speck of  
dust would pierce the sky throughout its infinity with an  
unbearable encumbrance.

I hear the thundering flood tumbling my life from  
world to world and form to form, scattering my being  
in an endless spray of gifts, in sorrowings and songs.  
( *Fugitive* 1 ).

The Soul, amidst all the changes of mind and body remains intact, it moves from form to form through a series of countless births and deaths. It is like a restless bird that flies through darkness and light, from one realm to another.<sup>20</sup> So there is no real death, there being life after death in some other form and there being rebirth.<sup>21</sup> This faith in the eternity of life amidst all its vicissitudes is a solvent of all disturbing thoughts about death. In Tagore this faith ( of course, poetic in character ) is simple and unquestioning. Sings he :

If such be thy will I shall come back again to the shore of this sea  
with its undulating waves of joys and sorrows.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See the poem *Balaka*, No. 86 in *Balaka*.

<sup>21</sup> See poems Nos. 18, 19 and 80 in *Balaka*.

<sup>22</sup> पुनरावर्त्तन in *Gitali* ( 1914 ).



again,

I shall be called by another name, and be clasped in other arms, but the same unchanging I shall come and go for ever.<sup>23</sup>

In poems after *Balaka* there are references to time, both direct and indirect, but they show no essential change in the position. Tagore has found his final solution of the problem of time ; it is both intuitively satisfying and intellectually comprehensive, and he holds it to the last. He ever assures us that

The path of the soul's journey stretches in front of you  
towards the Infinite.

You must fare forth on this path alone,  
surpassing and endless is this wonder.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> चिर आमि in *Gitanitan* ( 1915 ).

<sup>24</sup> परम मूल्य written on 19th Dec. 1937.



## A CHALLENGING DECADE :

BENGALI LITERATURE IN THE FORTIES

By LILA RAY

SARAT CHANDRA CHATTERJEE died in 1928 and Rabindranath Tagore in 1941. These two great figures, Sarat Chandra in an intimate, personal way and Rabindranath with the wide sweep of his universal spirit, so dominated the literary life of Bengal that their passing was the passing of an age.

War came uninvited in 1939 and the stage was set for further change. Headed by Achintya Kumar Sen Gupta and Premendra Mitra, the *Kallol* group of writers which revolted against the influence of Tagore with much youthful exuberance in the early thirties, had reached maturity.\* It was upon them and other writers of their age that the responsibility of answering the challenge of the time devolved. Older and younger writers also reacted, each in his own way, for there was excitement and exhilaration in it as well as pain. A senior novelist, Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, in his presidential address at the Prabasi Bangiya Sahitya Sammelan at Cawnpore in 1945, sounded a note of hope and warning. "This tremendous war", he said, "transforms life into great living. . . . When the times in which we live merge into a new age the face of the world changes with them. The aspect of human life that is revealed during such changes furnishes sustenance for men of subsequent ages. . . . There is need in this new perception, of great poetry in literature today. If we have not this awareness, if we lose *en masse* our clear vision and our sense, our literary

\* An authentic account of the *Kallol* movement is given by Achintya Kumar Sen Gupta in his book, *Kallol Yug* (1950).



efforts may encounter two obstacles. Firstly, in our anxiety to save ourselves we may cling to the old for simple self-preservation; secondly, in pursuing the new way we may grow confused and agitated, go mad and forego association. Mistaking our objective we may become self-centred and plough a lonely furrow." There is nothing here of the paralysis of will or the ineffectualness that afflicted writers of the same period in England.

The Leftist writing of the thirties, the anti-Fascist movement and the war-time alliance with Russia did, however, have profound influence. The attention of Bengali writers was turned to Leftist writing in general and Russian literature in particular. More classics have been translated from Russian than from any other literature, including English. And the revolutionary ferment in India has given Gorky and other Soviet writers a large body of readers. The Anti-Fascist Writers and Artists Association, with which many well-known names were associated, was very active throughout the war years. Auden and Spender have left their mark on Bengali poetry just as T. S. Eliot has. It is curious that Eliot, the eminent reactionary, has influenced most Bishnu Dey, the chief of Bengali Leftist poets. The Leftist movement deeply affected the work of writers not directly associated with it also and brought into Bengali literature many *milieus* hitherto untouched by the pen. The late Bibhuti Bhusan Bandyopadhyay, presiding over the Modern Bengali Literature Section of the Prabasi Sahitya Sammelan in 1945, spoke appreciatively of it. He said: "For the writer or artist who dwells in man, country and race cannot be delimited. The best sign in modern Bengali literature is that today it has come out under the broad blue sky of a greater freedom. . . . I know that among those who advance to do the spade work on this new road many will be stranded on the edge of the desert and die. . . . Yet it is with the sweat of their brows that the dust will be watered and the clear line of a thoroughfare emerge."



In giving literary expression to the Famine of 1943 the Leftists were the most forward. Its first visible effect was a spate of short stories, raw with shock, horror and bewilderment. These have documentary and topical value. Some of the best were collected by Parimal Goswami under the title, *Mahamanwantar*. Several highly successful plays, notably *Nabanna* (The Harvest Festival), were produced. With the slackening of the first violent impetus the stream of feeling gained depth and novels appeared, the most memorable being *Manwantar* by Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay. But it is much too soon to expect a masterpiece to emerge from the cauldron of 1943.

Another effect of the Famine, the full consequences of which have still to be realised, is the apparently total extinction of the class of wandering minstrels, denominational and secular, who lived upon the alms their singing brought them. With them has been lost a rich treasure of folk-song and poetry.

The last and hardest phase of India's struggle for Independence began in 1942. It has little place in the literature of the time. Lamentable as it is, it is nevertheless a fact that no adequate literary record of the nationalist struggle exists. The reason is not far to seek; it is to be found in the harsh law of arbitrary arrest and indefinite detention without trial. Writers, from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee down, have been deeply inspired by the struggle for freedom but they have been compelled to give that inspiration indirect expression, dressing it in historical garb as he did or avoiding explicit reference to it. Bengali writers have become expert in the art of suggestion and oblique reference. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's *Pather Dabi*, mild as it is, was a proscribed book for many years. Rabindranath Tagore much admired the young men who were fighting for their country's liberty, and in a conversation with Annada Sankar Ray once expressed the deep frustration he felt at not being able to speak out for them or portray them truthfully. He did what it was possible for him to do in *Char Addhyay*. The first novel to express the spirit of the struggle with full freedom, *Jagari*, by



Satinath Bhaduri, had to wait until Independence was imminent before it could be published. The action takes place in 1942. Much rich and exciting material has now become available to writers on this subject.

A Congress Sahitya Sangha was formed in 1945 on the eve of freedom. Its founder-secretary, Sachindra Nath Mitra, was the first of the four satyagrahis who gave their lives to restore peace to Calcutta after the recrudescence of communal rioting in the end of August 1946. For with Independence came a new menace, Hindu and Muslim enmity. The more prominent writers set their faces against communalism from the first and did all they could, publicly and privately, to stop it. Meetings with mixed programmes were held and peace processions taken out during the Id and Pujah celebrations. "The literature's and journalist's responsibility in saving the country from the sin of fratricide," wrote four prominent writers in a statement to the press in 1947, "is not less than anybody else's. With shame and sorrow we observe how some newspapers and periodicals are playing the murderous physician . . . . We condemn this suicidal policy in one voice and . . . we have made up our minds to have nothing to do with these journals and newspapers . . ."

The prevailing spirit of chauvinistic patriotism inevitably affected the intellectual life of the two new states however, and Partition divided the loyalties of writers. A few weeks of civil strife did what six years of global war could not. Hindus and Muslims were closely interwoven in the fabric of the country's cultural and economic life. The violent tearing apart of the threads resulted in an almost complete cessation of normal activity. Writers in East Bengal are having to fight even for their language, the language of the people, which is being neglected in favour of Urdu, the official substitute for it.

As the economic consequence of Partition have made themselves felt economic distress, already rendered acute by the war, has sharpened. The big publishing houses are situated in



Calcutta and the suspension of trade deprived them of three-fourths of their market. The best book-binders and press machine-men are Muslims, the book-sellers and publishers, Hindus. For days and nights together members of the Publishers' Association kept vigil over the homes of the binders to prevent them from being attacked. Many binders fled to Pakistan for a time and business was at a standstill. Riots and refugees made their appearances in the stories published currently in the press.

Periodicals which had weathered the alarums and shortages (the paper shortage was the most serious) capitulated and went out of print. Others sustained heavy losses. Buddhadeva Bose has kept his little magazine of verse, *Kavita*, going with great difficulty. A number of writers have capitulated too, turning to more lucrative employment or taking spiritual refuge, as Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay warned them they might do, in the old, the traditional, the orthodox. Kazi Nazrul Islam, the fiery poet and rebel, lost his mind early in the war. The more radical of the young Leftist writers have been or are in prison, arrested as arbitrarily as the Nationalists of the last generation. Two have died. Somen Chanda, a writer of undoubted genius, was brutally assassinated on the streets of Dacca while leading a procession of railway workers in 1942. Sukanta Bhattacharya, a poet of much originality and promise died of t. b. at the age of twenty in 1947. Other writers have retired to ivory towers, turning their faces away from problems that have become too much for them. These find themselves in the intellectual climate of post-war England, confronted with a spiritual abyss, isolated, neurotic, suffering. Buddhadeva Bose speaks for them in an article written for *Nine* in 1950. He says: "Yet the main trouble is not that the writer cannot earn enough through his vocation—for that has always been the case—but that the vocation itself is lost . . . . He no longer knows—which he did know before the war—whom it is he is writing for; there is no longer that subtle, silent communication between writer and reader which is so necessary for his continuation as an artist . . . those troubled by



the inescapable urge to utter the authentic word . . . are carrying on a kind of secret, triumphant toil, without anything to look forward to but a period of progressive deterioration and without anything to fortify themselves with except the bitter patience that comes from the faith that civilisation cannot perish."

The pressure, economic, moral and spiritual, to which Bengali writers have been subjected during these ten turbulent years has been great. Fantastically sensitive, they have been exposed and tested again and again as crisis has yielded to crisis. Their personalities have been stripped by the searching light of the challenge flung at them and they have stood silhouetted against a background of devastation. Some have discovered themselves in a way not possible in normal times. Others, unable to face the personal denouement, have succumbed, escaping into comforting shadow. Bengali literature has been largely purged of a certain supercilious cynicism and a rather facetious sophistication which in the past have not infrequently been mistaken for talent. It has gained in depth, seriousness, passion and intensity. How many writers and which writers are able to resolve in their art the agony they have experienced remains for the future to reveal. It is enough now that standards have not been lowered and that their achievement compares favourably with the achievements of other happier decades. This is very creditable. The short story has undergone a remarkable development in the hands of many competent writers and is now a major art form. Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay has written his best books, blending the regional with the sociological novel. Achintya Kumar Sen Gupta has systematically explored the life of various classes of people. Buddhadeva Bose has concentrated his attention on style, experimenting with numerous forms both in prose and poetry. Abanindranath Tagore, the famous painter and story-teller, has dictated his delightful memoirs to Rani Chanda. The first long epic-novel in Bengali, comparable with the work of Proust and Jules Romains, has been successfully completed



by Annada Sankar Ray. He has also developed the personal essay, shaping it into a tense, subtle and elastic medium for thought. And he has created a new category of light satirical verse. Kazi Abdul Wadud has emerged as a powerful and noble thinker. Balai Chand Mukhopadhyay has sought to break down barriers of the mind in order to penetrate deeper into it. Syed Mujtaba Ali has written a witty and hilarious account of his sojourn in the Afghanistan of Amanullah in *Deshe Bideshe*. Dilip Kumar Roy has poured out a steady stream of devotional poems, songs and novels from Pondichery. The work of editing and publishing the finished work of Rabindranath Tagore has gone forward.

The varied misfortunes of the forties have, however, considerably hampered the development of new talent. No group of iconoclastic young men has emerged comparable in energy to the *Sabuj Patra*, the *Kallol* or the *Parichaya* groups of the twenties and thirties. This does not argue well for the future and is causing much concern.



## REVIEWS OF BOOKS, BOOK NOTES

*The Cocktail Party.* A Comedy by T. S. ELIOT. Faber and Faber Ltd., London. 1950. 169 pp.

Why should the American News-magazine *Time* publish, a full-length article on T. S. Eliot? And how did it happen that his latest play *The Cocktail Party* should have become a Broadway hit this season? The Eliot of the *Waste Land* was, we thought, sufficiently high-brow to elude popular appeal; his poetry sufficiently esoteric to be far beyond the mental grasp of the average American theatre-goer. We evidently were mistaken. Eliot has become a "hit" and it seems likely that he is going to stay. It has taken the men-in-the-street half-a-century to realise the "waste-land within" and now hundreds of low-brow Americans go on a pilgrimage to Broadway to witness there a dramatic representation of their own petty emotional conflicts, their frivolous nervous breakdowns, their despicable mental failures.

Eliot, of course, talks down to them. With the publication of his *Ash-Wednesday* he had lifted himself upon to a pedestal and has been preaching from there ever since. His voice is crisp, clear-cut, and lacking in modulation; his mind puritanical, severe, and rather irritatingly like that of a frustrated teacher. He lacks the ready-made formula of the romantic poets, the message of brotherhood, of love, of equality. Eliot neither loves his contemporaries nor does he believe in any kind of equality. His message is consciously, all too consciously, that of a prophet in a waste land, a strangely unemotional cry in a wilderness overflowing with pent-up passions.

Eliot's pessimism, a result of his upbringing and of his character, seems to appeal to the Broadway spectators. That he calls his play a "comedy" is hardly relevant at all. Dante's *Inferno* or Shakespeare's *King Lear* may very well be considered "comedies" once you start turning commonly accepted human standards upside down and start looking at life through the eyes of corruption, greed, and lunacy. None of the characters in this "comedy" are entirely normal if judged by the standards of common human conduct. Apart from their gentility which at times is both ludicrous and repulsive, everyone of them carries within him his own private inferno, the inferno of emotional starvation, of maladjustment, of intellectual impotence, of a restlessness without cause and without salvation.



We first meet them at a cocktail party ; they are prosperous, well-dressed, smooth spoken, conscious of their little eccentricities which they like exhibiting in public ( having little else of interest to exhibit ), they discuss their private life, their wretched and promiscuous love affairs, and arrive at the conclusion that this kind of life is not worth living and that they have lost their way and need the helpful advice of a doctor. The implications of this first cocktail party are obvious. Eliot has been preaching in his crisp harsh voice in between the lines : there was a time when people in distress or frustration used to find spiritual refuge, a resting place for all, in the Church ; a time when an all-embracing ( though by no means democratic ) faith provided salvation for those who were ready to turn over a new leaf, ready indeed to atone for their sins. Instead of to the priest, our upper-classes hopefully turn to the doctor, the psycho-analyst, the professional salvationist ( at 3 guineas an hour ). His consulting room lacks the melodramatic paraphernalia of the Holy Church ; it is bare and crisp and suffers no modulation whatsoever, just like Mr. Eliot's own voice.

It is in such a consulting-room that we find the guests of the preceding cocktail party in the second act of the play. They come one by one, uncover before our eyes their mean and petty infernoes, get the advice they had secretly wished for, pay their fee, and go home, cured. The doctor had been present at the cocktail party. an unidentified guest, his name being Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly. He had known them all, like a priest who knows all the members of his parish ; and thus he helps them to unravel the irrational but quite uninteresting complications of their daily life. They all believe him, believe in his integrity of purpose and in his mature judgment. It is their belief that cures them and not the doctor—and we are rather unpleasantly reminded of Eliot's crisp, brittle, unmelodious voice exhorting us to return to ancestral faith.

But there is one character in the play, a woman, Celia Coplestone, who has gone farther on the way towards frustration and despair than all the others. She asks the doctor :

And I feel I must.. atone—is that the word ?

Can you treat a patient for such a state of mind ?

Sir Henry has an advice to offer, a rather radical cure for those who get drowned in their own hopelessness. The first cure is the one that makes you return, a repentant sinner, to "the human condition",

The second is unknown, and so requires faith—

The kind of faith that issues from despair.

The destination cannot be described.

And you know very little until you get there ;



You will journey blind. But the way leads towards possession  
Of what you have sought for in the wrong place.

...It is a terrifying journey...

Celia's journey to far-off Kinkanja forms no part of the play. Indeed we never meet her again. But in the third act, when all the characters are again present at a cocktail party, Celia becomes the main subject-matter of conversation. For Kinkanja lies somewhere "in the East"—"an island that you won't have heard of", where another one of the characters, Alexander MacColgie Gibbs, had gone "on a tour of inspection of local conditions". This man Gibbs who has been staying at Kinkanja with the Governor has a great deal to tell of "local conditions"; and quite naturally, Celia, who had gone out there, after having joined an order, "a very austere one", as a nurse, got all mixed up in those local conditions and got killed in the process of trying to straighten things out. Kinkanja, it appears, is famous both for its monkeys and for its natives; some of these natives worship the monkeys and others eat them. This, we are informed, led to trouble in the course of which not only monkeys but also white Europeans were killed and eaten. Celia, however, was crucified, having decided to carry on as a nursing sister to half-dying natives. She was crucified "near an anthill" and a shrine was promptly erected thereon where at present she is being worshipped by those few remaining natives who had neither been killed nor eaten. The British Empire got worried and sent a commission which has drawn up an interim report which, however, cannot be made public at present: "there are too many international complications..."

There they are all seated, those upper-class Englishmen and women with their ridiculous names, talking about Kinkanja, interim reports, monkeys, and Celia. They have each one of them found their way: the way of mediocrity and convention. And to them it is a good life. They talk about Celia's crucifixion—"just for a handful of plague-stricken natives who would have died anyway". And they rather resent the waste of human potentialities implied in her terrifying death. Only Sir Henry knows better; he knows that she, the most "faithful", the most believing and therefore most desperate of his "patients", paid "the highest price in suffering". He calls her life a "triumph" because she had found her way back to communion through action, and because she, among all the others, realised the implications of loneliness, that private little inferno which each one of us is carrying about with him, and transformed it into something sacred and lasting.

Once more T. S. Eliot has spoken. He has delivered his message in his dry, brittle voice. It is a message of self-sacrifice and dedication. It



has the severity, unpleasantness, and consistency of all messages ; and it is for those, at least, who have the courage to look at it straight in the face, rather terrifying. We feel uncomfortably chilly after having read this "comedy" : for Eliot here is walking over our grave.

Alex Aronson.

*A Year of Grace.* By VICTOR GOLLANCZ. Victor Gollancz Ltd.  
London. 576 pp. 10s. 6d.

HERE is a remarkable anthology, culled from a vast and wide range of reading, by the well-known publisher, Victor Gollancz. It is, as the sub-title tells us, a collection of "passages chosen to express a mood about God and man". The mood it expresses is one of courageous facing of the facts of life, of sin and suffering, of good and evil, of freedom and responsibility, of one who has passed through the hell of terror and despair, but has emerged out of it thankful to the divine grace that has upheld him through it all. The predominant note running through the whole is that of humanistic religion, of religion that seeks no other-worldly escape from life, but accepts and transforms life in this world, which is the common world of us all.

The selections range over the whole field of human experience, Buddhist, Hindu, Greek, Roman, Jewish, Christian and Muslim. Modern sceptics like Bertrand Russell are also brought under contribution. An omission one would note is that of Chinese thought. The anthologist himself being a Jew, it is the Jewish understanding of God and of His relation to man, the profound Hebrew insight into the inalienable relation between love to God and love to fellow-man, that sets the tone of the whole collection.

There are contradictions, as the anthologist himself admits, yet there is a remarkable consensus in the attitude of mind reflected in the selections. In that sense the book is another contribution to the Perennial Philosophy of mankind, pointing to the emergence of that union of all who grow in love and understanding which is mankind's one hope. It is not intellectual satisfactions or solutions of problems that are intended, but a common attitude in facing the common lot and destiny of all mankind. As such the book will be found to have a message for the times and might bring joy and consolation to readers all over the world.

S. K. George.



*Men and Manners.* By PARDESI. Hind Kitabs Ltd., Bombay, 1950.  
138 pp. Rs. 3-0-0.

*Let Us Be Honest.* By D. PANT. Hind Kitabs Ltd., Bombay, 1950.  
85 pp. Rs. 2-8-0.

*Men and Manners* is a most interesting collection of personal essays on subjects mostly drawn from everyday incidents of life. The author writing under a pseudonym plays the role of a by-stander who, without identifying himself with any of the objects around him, yet sees most of the game of life. With a keen, observant mind he takes quiet 'eyefuls' of things around him and re-captures with pleasure the oddities and idiosyncrasies of men. He goes his way, reacts quickly to everything he notices, and records his impressions with commendable ease and felicity of expression. His observations, full of meaning and purpose, are enlivened by sparkling wit and humour. What matters most in personal essays is the personality of the writer. The writings must bear the stamp of a distinct personality. The present writer knows his job and he successfully fulfils most of the conditions required for this specialised type of literary exercise.

I would, however, like to utter one word of caution to Pardesi. English literature is extremely rich in this particular branch of literary art. He must be an ambitious Indian who aspires to make his mark in a field which has been enriched by the contributions of Lamb, Stevenson, Hazlitt, G. K. Chesterton and a host of other masters of English style. Indian literatures, on the other hand, are distinctly poor in this respect. Pardesi could make real contributions to his literature if he had tried his hand at *belles lettres* in his own language.

*Let Us Be Honest* by D. Pant is another collection of essays ; but unlike the foregoing it is of a more serious type. The writer gives a searching analysis of all our present day problems—social, economic and political. It is more than a mere superficial study of those problems which are agitating thinking minds all over the world. There is an attempt at going deep down to the very roots of the world's malady. The writer does not mince matters, he does not indulge in fruitless dialectics but exposes all social evils with brutal frankness. He is ruthless in his condemnation of man's stupidity and hypocrisy. His intention is to shock people out of that attitude of connivance and complacence which perpetuate evil in human society. He has, however, complete faith in man. Describing himself as 'meliorist', he believes man can yet pull himself out of this awful mess provided he addresses himself to



those problems with honesty and sincerity. Let us be honest—that is the burden of his song. He concludes each one of his essays with this very refrain.

Indrajit.

*China's Discovery of Africa.* By J. J. L. DUYVENDAK. 35 Pp. Arthur Probsthain, London. 1949. 6 sh.

The book consists of two lectures delivered by one of the best known contemporary Sinologists to the School of Oriental and African Studies of the London University. The author discusses in these lectures certain problems connected with the ancient Chinese sea-borne trade and the mention of Africa in some medieval Chinese texts. He discovers the first positive mention of an African country in a Chinese text of the 9th century—*Yu yang tsa tsu*. The text refers to the country of Po-pa-li, also called Pi-pa-lo in a later text. The country was famous for its ivory, ambergris, camel-bird and tsu-la (giraffe). Po-pa-li was no other than Berbera on the Somali coast. Another country mentioned in this connection was Malin-Melinda. More detailed references to African countries are found in the work of Chao-Ju-kua which belongs to the 13th century but draws upon sources which go back to the 12th. In this work we find clear reference to Chinese trade with the country of Chung-li i. e. Somali and Ts'eng-po i. e. Zanguebar. Trade in slaves of Zanguebar was very extensive and they were also taken to China. Chao-Ju-kua mentions also the country of Wu-szu-li i. e. Misr (Egypt), its capital Chieh-yeh (Cairo), its port O-ken-t'o (Alexandria) and Mu-ku-tu-shu (Mogadishu). The identifications of these places are made more definite by Prof. Duyvendak than was possible before.

Prof. Duyvendak also discusses the texts and new inscriptions of the Ming period relating to the famous sailings of Cheng-ho and his party from China up to the African coast for more than seven times. Some points relating to Cheng-ho's sailings have been discussed in details. Two of these points may be mentioned here—reference to a Goddess called *Tien-fei* "Celestial Spouse" worshipped in a temple at T'ai-ts'ang and the importation of Ki-lin to China. Cheng-ho, although a Mahomedan, worshipped this Goddess everytime he undertook an expedition and attributed his success to her favour. The goddess presided over the seas and protected all her devotees at the time of difficulty. When there was a hurricane suddenly there would appear a divine lantern shining in the mast and the danger would disappear. Prof. Duyvendak explains this miracle as a reference to St. Elmo's fire which is well-known in sea-lore. I suggested an identification of the sea-goddess with Manimekhalā, the well-known sea-goddess of the Buddhist



texts worshipped in South India and in the Far East as a presiding deity of the seas and protector of sailors in difficulties ( *Visva-Bharati Annals*, I, p. 103 ). According to the Buddhist accounts Manimekhalā appears in the sky through clouds holding 'a jewel in her hand which produces blazing fire in the sky' and illuminates it ( *Memorial Sylvain Lévi* 371-387 ). A connection between the Chinese sea-goddess and the Manimekhalā, well known in the Far East, is more than probable. The strange animal—Ki-lin, first presented to the Chinese court by the Bengal Chief, Saifuddin and then directly imported from Africa has been long recognised as giraffe. Prof. Duyvendak shows that the Chinese name is adapted from *girin* which is the word for giraffe in the Somali language.

Prabodh Chandra Bagchi,

*India's Culture Through the Ages.* By M. L. VIDYARTHI. Tapeswari Sahitya Mandir, Kanpur. 1951. Two parts bound together. 216+166. Rs. 5-0-0.

The author presents his book to the reader with great humility and diffidence, virtues which are now-a-days rare among writers of books. This humility has saved the author from indulging in tall talks and enabled him to give an excellent objective picture of Indian civilisation from the earliest to the modern times. The first part deals with the ancient period : Indus Civilisation, the Vedic and Epic civilisations, Jainism, Buddhism and Puranic religions and cultural history up to the end of the Gupta age. The second part deals with the following subjects in broad outline : the cultural trends of the early medieval period, Islamic period, contact between the West and the East and India's renaissance. The whole book as the author says is a panoramic survey. It is really such, done in a very neat manner with clear outlines of the principal cultural trends. He believes that there is a crisis in our civilisation on account of the Western challenge to our genius, but pertinently notes, "But if her culture has been dynamic, absorbent, continuous and resilient, stooping only to conquer, sheltering many races and creeds only to enfold them in a common spirituality . . then we need not despair of the ultimate solution". Long quotations from the writings of others mar the lucidity of presentation at times and these may be avoided in a future edition. On the whole, the book is well-written and can be highly recommended to those for whom it is meant.

Prabodh Chandra Bagchi.



*The Fundamentals of Hinduism : A Philosophical Study.* By SATISH CHANDTA CHATTERJEE. Das Gupta & Co., Ltd., 54/3 College Street, Calcutta. XIV+187 pp. Rs. 3-8-0.

Dr. Chatterjee's book is meant to be a guide for the understanding of Hinduism. He presents the subject from the point of view of a student of philosophy and religion, and his treatment, as he says, is philosophical. He believes that those who are not conversant with Hindu Philosophy are apt to misunderstand and misrepresent Hinduism : although it is possible to argue from an opposite point of view that Hinduism being a system of religion can be understood only as a religion.

The book may be divided into two parts : the first part, consisting of the first four chapters, deals with what may be called the historical development of Hinduism from the Vedic to the Pauranika, specially in regard to the nature of God, the conception of self, and the theory of the origin of the different worlds. The second part, which forms the greater bulk of the book, deals with the real fundamentals of Hinduism such as the Doctrine of Rebirth Law of Karma, Doctrine of bondage and liberation, means of liberation such as the various methods of Yoga : Raja, Karma, Bhakti and Jnana. In this second part the book is excellent, the presentation of the subjects is clear, simple and attractive—better than anything else written before on the subject.

Some criticism may be levelled against the first part of the book i. e., the first four chapters. In trying to trace the origin of Hinduism from the Vedic, Dr. Chatterjee has naturally to fall back on the European studies of the subject and examine the theories advanced by Maxmuller and others. From their point of view, one of the important questions is whether Vedic religion was polytheistic or monotheistic. Maxmuller avoids both the terms and defines it as henotheistic—on the assumption that the Vedic sages attribute the status of Supreme Lord to each Vedic god at the time of worshipping it. Dr. Chatterjee defines it as monism on the basis of a few utterances in the later hymns of the R̥gveda which speak of one reality in many forms including the gods and goddesses. But if we discard the question of chronology of the various mandalas of the R̥gveda, and take the Gayatri as the bedrock of Hinduism, it is not necessary to consider the European interpretations at all, as it is possible to say straightway that the Vedic *devatas* have nothing to do with the Supreme Reality ; they are just the tattvas. It cannot but be admitted that modern Hinduism starts with the *Gita* which synthesises the ancient religion with the new tendencies ; but we do not know how far the old religion has been preserved in its old



meaning. Dr. Chatterjee's book is on the whole excellent and can be highly recommended for study and reference by all students of Hindu religion.

P. C. B.

*Music of Life.* By L. SEWAK CHAND RAMSAMUJ. Hind Kitabs Ltd. Bombay. 99 Pp. Rs. 4-12-0.

*A Poem of Praise.* By H. N. SPALDING. Basil Blackwell, Oxford. 71 Pp. 7s. 6d.

It is reasonable to expect an element of newness in contemporary poetry. But to demand that it must be new in a specified manner and thus fulfil what are arbitrarily supposed to be the requirements of the age is to take away its freedom and force it down to a lower level of expression. This is hardly the way to get the newness we all want, but in the last two or three decades, a considerable portion of the total output of poetry all the world over seems to have been brought out by a similar demand. The grievous thing was not that certain attitudes, affiliations or devices won their way easily to public acceptance, but that there must have been certain genuine reactions to the contemporary scene which never had a chance of struggling through the barrage of our modern literary theories. It is some consolation to think that now at long last some of these long-stifled voices may be finding the world more willing to listen to their version of the story of Man. The two books of poems here under review owe their publication to an awareness, or perhaps only an expectation, of a favourable change in the mental climate of at least a section of the world's poetry-reading public.

Leonard Sewak Chand Ramsamuj, an Indian born in the Pacific and a member of the Methodist Church of New Zealand writes in rhythmic prose about the present predicament of the human race. This he does by indirect suggestion. He states his own individual case with impassioned outbursts of regret and hope, seeking thereby to typify the recent tragedy of all mankind. Ramsamuj's verses show an even flow and many felicities of expression, but no less frequently do his phrases fall to the level of mere rhetoric; and his balanced diction tends to grow monotonous and mechanical. The book includes a poem on the Tajmahal and Shah Jahan's love and another on Mahatma Gandhi. The book has on the whole a ring of sincerity and a directness of emotional appeal which will be liked by those who still believe in religion and idealism.

*A Poem of Praise* is more mature in thought and expression than the former book.



H. N. Spalding has for the theme of his book the "glory of man and the glory of God". 'These poems', says he, 'point, not to World War, but to World Renaissance'. And the fervour which quickens the pieces in this book is no less religious than poetic. There is, of course, no essential contradiction between religion and poetry. Faith can very well serve as the starting-point or even be the final message, but the movement of feeling and thought must be, in the main, the result of the poetic process, which can and should be distinguished from all other inner processes of the mind. There are pieces in this book, which to our mind, partly suffer because of the insistence with which the thoughts and feelings they contain are continually directed towards God and the Godlike. They cannot be said to have the spontaneity, the emotional inevitability of Gerald Hopkins's startling ejaculations. But there are many pieces which combine a rich poetic sensitiveness with the vigour of an abiding faith.

In the fashioning of his verses and the simple and yet effective turn of his phrases, Spalding shows considerable artistic ability. Many of the shorter pieces are delightful to read. But the poet appears to us most successful where he draws freely from Nature, in such pieces as Spring, Verestchagin, The Sea, Sea-Shells etc. This is not to say that his adventures beyond thought and sense, towards the infinite, are not interesting. But the descriptive method can hardly do justice to such a theme, however accomplished the poet may be. A straight arrow-like flight of lyric impulse like that of Tagore or a calm and intense vision like that of Sri Aurobindo would be more to the purpose.

Sunilchandra Sarkar.

*India Since Partition.* Andrew Mellor. Turnstile Press, London.  
Available at Orient Longmans, Calcutta. 1951. 156 Pp. 7s. 6d.

Mr. Mellor came to India in 1947 to report the transfer of power for the British Labour Party paper *Daily Herald* and stayed on for two more years. In this little book he has attempted with success an analytical summary of the trends and events in India from 1947 to '50—four years that were packed with significant happenings and which surpass, in importance and interest, any previous period of India's long history. The Labour Party background helped Mr. Mellor to arrive at a deeper understanding of the problems of India and the Congress Party approach to them. For, it is well-known that Gandhiji and Nehru had and have many admirers among both the leaders and the rank and file of the Labour Party, and that there is a good deal of ideological sympathy between the



two parties. This of course does not mean that Mr. Mellor has condoned or slurred over the faults and follies of the Congress Governments, at the Centre and the States. To take one instance, mark his justified comments on the Industrial Policy Resolution of the Central Government issued in April, 1948—"as in many plans and policies which India has outlined in the past three years, it was again a case of her attempting to run before she could walk". Incidentally, the chapter on the 'Economic Situation' from which the quotation comes, is one of the best in the book.

Keeping in mind the scope and compass of the book, it is undoubtedly one of the best guides on contemporary India.

Asim Datta.

*Literature and Literary Criticism.* By M. G. BHATE. Karnatak Publishing House, Bombay. 152 Pp.

That the reading public has been taking a more intelligent interest in literature than before is proved by the very large body of literature on literary criticism that has been growing up side by side with creative writing. It is increasingly becoming an important field of inquiry for all students of literature. Literary criticism is at bottom the art of intelligent reading; but there are problems connected with the reading of literature. It is in the consideration of these problems leading to acceptable standards of evaluation, that criticism finds its proper avocation and fulfilment of its function.

Various standards for evaluating literature have been advocated from age to age. As literature has passed through an evolutionary process, literary criticism, too, has passed through different stages of development. Widely accepted theories and standards have been found wanting and have gone up in smoke before the fire of modern critical batteries. Literary criticism today has been raised to the level of Science. Indeed, explorations into the mysteries of literature are comparable only to fundamental researches in physical science.

Prof. Bhate, in this thin little volume, has practically run the whole gamut of literary theories starting from Aristotle's Poetics to I. A. Richards' Practical criticism. Considering the vast scope of the subject, Prof. Bhate's treatment, it must be admitted, has been rather sketchy. One would naturally expect a more detailed examination of the various theories of criticism. Nevertheless, students of literature will find the book interesting as well as useful. The author has presented them with such discernment



and power of judgment as could be expected of a reputed teacher of English literature.

H. D.

*In Transit.* By VENU CHITALE. Hind Kitabs Ltd., Bombay. 504 Pp. Rs. 5-8-0.

The theme of this book of fiction is the gradual unfoldment of life in a big Maharastrian family at Poona, its daily routine and rituals, and its big festive or tragic events from time to time. The story begins with Abba, the patriarchal head of the Sarafs, the renowned family of jewellers, celebrating the marriage of his grand-son Dada and ends after the death of all the chief figures in the earlier part of the book and with the emergence of the third generation of boys and girls in the family, with their own problems and ways of life. The obvious changes in temperament and outlook among the members are set off and explained against the background of the progress of the national movement during 1915-1935. The author handles the numerous characters in the book with ease and assurance, bringing out the essential characteristics of each. Her success in this is due more to actual knowledge and observation than to imagination. But the characters nowhere obstruct the smooth flow of the narrative, the special charm of which lies in the graphic depictions of the movement of life in a typical Maharastrian family. The author had the advantage of higher education in London and was associated for some time with the B. B. C. This has enabled her to bring out the distinctive features of Indian life so that they may be easily understood and appreciated by English readers. The novel is certainly interesting, specially because it has no social or political theories to offer. The little mystification about the fate of Abba with which the book ends, may, however, come in for criticism by the more intellectual readers.

Sunil Chandra Sarkar.

*My Pilgrimages to Ajanta and Bagh.* By MUKUL DEY. Second edition. With an Introduction by Laurence Binyon. Oxford University Press. 185 Pp. Rs. 12-8-0.

The book, which was first published in 1925, is a well-known introduction to the study of the paintings of Ajanta and Bagh. As the first edition was long out of print the publication of a second edition is exceedingly



welcome. Mr. Dey had undertaken a journey to Ajanta and Bagh as early as 1917 when the caves were still inaccessible, and made exquisite copies of the frescoes which he has reproduced in the book. There was room, as Laurence Binyon says in his Introduction, for such a popular book on the paintings, as nothing else can more effectively bring the Indian art within the reach of the common reader. Mr. Dey describes the caves, their paintings and his own work there with the sincerity and simplicity of a real artist and thus his book has a direct appeal to the reader. Such a book is best suited to be a text book in all Colleges and Institutions of Art where the curriculum has a place for the study of Indian painting.

P. C. B.

*Tirukkural with English Translation.* By V. R. RAMACHANDRA DIKSITAR. With a Foreward by Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar. Adyar Library 1942. Rs. 3-0-0.

The Tirukkural is a well-known Tamil classic in the form of terse aphorisms dealing with the three categories of life : Dharma, Artha and Kāma. It has been traditionally attributed to the sage Tiruvallur of about the 1st century B. C. Tamil people regard it as their sacred scripture. The author, Tiruvallur was a holy sage of a very high order and was well-versed in Vedic religion and tradition. He has composed his *Kural* on the subjects which are non-controversial and may be regarded as common to all religions and beliefs. It was high time that an honest attempt was made to translate into English his sagacious sayings for the benefit of non-Tamil world. Prof. V. R. Ramachandra Diksitar has successfully carried out this undertaking at the suggestion of Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, the learned ex-Dewan of Mysore. We must offer our cordial felicitations to both the translator and the Publisher, the Theosophical Society, for bringing to us this most valuable Tamil scripture in English garb. The printing of the Tamil original and translations on parallel pages is highly useful. A special edition of the Text in Roman transliteration has also been brought out.

N. A. Sastri



*Gaudapādiyam Agamasastram* : Sanskrit commentary by VIDHUSEKHARA BHATTACHARYA. Calcutta University. 1950. 96+249 Pp. Rs. 8-8-0.

A few years ago the Agamasastra of Gaudapada with English translation, notes and introduction by Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Vidhusekhara Bhattacharyya was published by the Calcutta University. The same work is now presented to us in its Sanskrit garb. Shastriji's illuminating commentary in English was accessible only to English-knowing orientalists but the present work will be available to pundits also. I had the occasion to write a review-article of the English version in the columns of the *Visva-Bharati Patrika* ( Hindi ), Vol, III, Part I. to which readers interested in details are referred. Shastriji has discovered unmistakably Buddhist influence on the work which strikes a conspicuous note of dissent with the traditional commentary of Sankaracharya. It would perhaps be meet if I expressed my appreciation of this erudite commentary of Shastriji's in a few verses in Sanskrit :

क्वचित्त्वं श्रौतं ग्रथितमिह गौडैर्निजकृतौ  
रहस्यं बौद्धानामभवदुपजीव्यं क्वचिदपि।  
विद्योर्दृष्टिर्ज्योत्स्ना तदिदमखिलं भासयति यद्  
विशेषाद् बौद्धानां समयमिह लुप्तं सुरगिरा ॥

ततो मान्या सेयं गुणनुतिवदान्यैरभिनवा  
चरित्रैः संयुक्ता सततमितिहासानुगधियाम् ।  
विमर्शं तत्त्वानां सममुपहरन्ती सुविशदं  
सुखा वाचां न्यासैः सपदि रमणीया विधुकृतिः ॥

Shanti Bhikshu.



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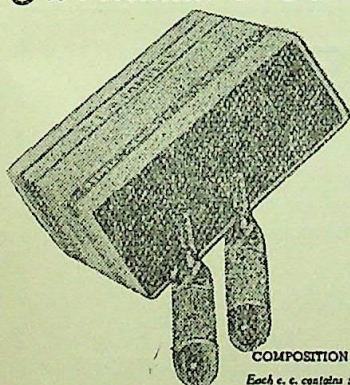
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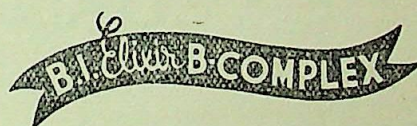
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